

# ESSAYS AND STUDIES

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## MILTON'S LINES ON SHAKESPEARE

THAT upon what Milton has to say about Shakespeare there should, after nearly three hundred years of commentation, be still room for comment, seems absurd. Yet any one who studies such texts and editions of Milton as are available will easily satisfy himself that the lines *On Shakespeare*, sometimes called, by a title to which, in Shakespeare's time, no exception could have been taken, a 'sonnet', but called by Milton's first editors (and perhaps by himself) an 'Epitaph', have received less attention than they deserve.

They were printed no less than five times during the life of their author. I say this because, though it is very likely known, I cannot discover that it has ever been said before. It is one of the paradoxes of our scholarship that we have no critical edition of Milton. The manuscripts and printed texts furnish abundant material, but the talent and enterprise necessary to dispose this effectively is still wanting. Rumour had it that Prof. Grierson was going to remove this reproach. But he has preferred the beautiful to the good, and the student of Milton has still nothing better to work with than either the text of Beeching (often seriously misleading) or that of Aldis Wright—well below the repute of so great a man—together with the commentaries of Masson, which contain much critical material, very ill digested. The student, if he turns, in Beeching's edition, to Milton's lines on Shakespeare, will find them correctly given according to the text of 1645. A foot-note will instruct him that they were 'reprinted in the second folio Shakespeare'; but only his native wit will tell him what this means. It means that the lines were *first*

printed in the second folio. Aldis Wright will tell him that, as it stands in the second folio, the poem 'is signed with the initials I. M.'; but he will have to go to the folio itself to discover that this is not true—the lines appear there without any signature at all. From Beeching he will learn that, punctuation and orthography apart, the text of 1645 differs from that of 1632 in five places. But neither from Beeching, nor from Aldis Wright, nor from Masson, nor, as far as I know, from any modern edition, will the student discover that, between the text of 1632 and that of 1645, there is yet another text, belonging to the year 1640, in which four of the variants of 1645 appear already, together with variants which no editor records. The text of 1632 was reprinted in 1664, in the third Shakespeare folio—Milton's verses disappear from the fourth folio; that of 1645 was reprinted in Milton's own text of 1673.

As I say, all this is very likely known. Yet, so far as I am aware, the only book which takes account of the text of 1640 is a book concerned, not with Milton, but with Shakespeare; namely, *Shakespeare's Centurie of Prayse*. In the second edition of that work (I have not seen the last edition), a footnote on p. 176 calls attention to it, and notes five of its seven variations from the text of 1632—when I say 'seven', I am not reckoning mere variations of stopping and spelling. The page-reference is wrongly given, and the editor omits to note, what might have been thought more interesting than anything else, that, in 1640 (Aldis Wright notwithstanding), the lines appeared for the first time with Milton's initials. The book in which they appeared is the 'Poems: Written by Wil. Shakespeare, Gent.', printed by Tho. Cotes for John Benson, London, 1640; where they are printed on the *last* leaf of sheet K. Sir Sidney Lee (who should know) speaks of this book as a volume 'of great rarity'—which might excuse, perhaps, the silence of Milton's editors.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, Miss Bartlett (who ought also to know) says of it bluntly, 'This is a very

<sup>1</sup> Birch knew that the 'Epitaph' was printed in the 1640 volume; and so did Newton. Warton, evidently, had not seen the book, but knew of it from Birch and Newton.

common book, as more than fifty copies of it are known'.<sup>1</sup> Copies are so common that in her 'Key to Owners' she does not think it necessary to tell us where they are. Certainly, where *he* is, in a critical world thus organized, the student does not know, but, with the other saints, he lives in expectation of a better world, and may, meanwhile, be referred to the Bodleian Library—though the book has, in fact, been reprinted.

So much is worth saying, if only in order to bring home to scholars the need that there is for a critical edition of Milton's works. The prose works are, of course, in a worse way than the poems,<sup>2</sup> but they matter less. For the preparation of a critical edition of Milton's poems, an edition setting out the variants of the manuscripts and of the texts printed in Milton's lifetime, not much more is needed than industry in collation and good sense in the arrangement of material. That Donne should be better edited than Milton is absurd.

The 1640 text of the 'Epitaph' on Shakespeare brings with it nothing very exciting—the principal variants from 1632 are, as I have said, known already from the text of 1645. But things being as they are, it is perhaps as well to set out here the text of 1640, together with the divergent readings of 1632 and 1645, save so far as these are merely matters of spelling and punctuation. I give the spelling and punctuation of 1640 without change. Except for spelling and punctuation, 1664 follows 1632, 1673 follows 1645:

<sup>1</sup> *Mr. William Shakespeare*, p. 12.

<sup>2</sup> Parts of the *Apology for Smectymnuus* are still presented in a text which makes nonsense: 'Only that odour, which . . . must needs offend his sense of smelling . . . I shall endeavour it may be offenceless to other men's *eares*'. Nonsense like that is easily corrigible—for '*eares*' we should read '*nares*'; yet Bohn's edition (pp 123 (penultimate line)–124) gives '*eas*'. In the same treatise, Bohn, p. 117, 'For albeit these thoughts to some will seem virtuous and commendable, to others only pardonable, to a third sort perhaps idle; yet the mentioning of them now will end *in serious*' For *in serious* we must obviously substitute '*inseitious*'. Yet this blunder is allowed to stand in a passage as famous as any in Milton. Of the misprints which disfigure those of the prose works which are written in Latin, it is unnecessary that I should speak.

*An Epitaph on the admirable Dramaticke  
Poet William Sheakespeare.*

What neede my *Shakespeare* for his honoured bones,  
The labour of an age, in piled stones,  
Or that his hallow'd Relikes should be hid,  
Under a starre-ypointing Pyramid ?  
Deare Sonne of Memory, great heire of Fame, 5  
What needs thou such weake witnesse of thy Name.  
Thou in our wonder and astoneshment,  
Hast built thy selfe a live-long Monument:  
For whilst to th'shame of slow endevouring Art,  
Thy easie numbers flow, and that each heart, 10  
Hath from the leaves of thy unvalu'd Booke,  
Those Delphicke lines with deepe Impression tooke.  
Then thou our fancy of our selfe bereaving,  
Dost make us marble with too much conceiving,  
And so Sepulcher'd in such pompe doth lie 15  
That Kings for such a Tombe would wish to die.

I. M.

*Title, line 2 W. Shakespeare 1632 1645 has for Title On Shakespear.*  
 1630 1 needs 1645 6 needst 1632 need'st 1645 dull witnesse  
 1632 weak witnes 1645 Name ? 1632 name ? 1645 8 lasting  
 1632 9 slow-endevouing 1632 slow-endeavouring 1645 10 each  
 part, 1632 12 tooke, 1632 took, 1645 13 our 1640 her 1632  
 it 1645 15 doth 1640 dost 1632 and 1645.

Mere misprints, such as *Sheakespeare* in the Title, *needs* in 6, *doth* in 15, and the mispunctuations *Name*. in 6, *tooke*. in 12, need not detain us. Orthographical variants as between the three texts are numerous; and though I have not thought them worth recording, it may yet be noticed that the volumes of 1632 and 1640, in preserving, as they do, again and again, the mute final -e of such words as *neede*, *selfe*, *pompe*, and in such forms as *Starre*, *Sonne*, agree with Milton's own practice as revealed in the Cambridge autographs; whereas in the 1645 text—which Milton might be supposed to have corrected for the press himself—his characteristic spellings are abandoned. This is interesting for the reason that exactly the same phenomenon meets us, on a larger scale, when we compare the

1637 edition of *Comus* (published, not by Milton, but by Lawes) with Milton's own edition. Lawes spells after the Cambridge autograph. In the edition of 1645, Milton, like a sensible man, left the spelling to the printer. In punctuation Milton was, I fancy, a good deal less interested than, if we may believe the Shakespearians, Shakespeare. He wrote, e.g. the first song in *Arcades*, without troubling himself to insert (save for a full point at the end) any stops at all beyond a comma in the ninth line—a comma which, in fact, appears in none of the printed editions! For myself, I have sometimes wondered what *Hamlet* would look like, in the first folio or in *any* quarto, if it were punctuated with the complete disregard for ‘distinctions’ which Shakespeare showed when he wrote the alleged Shakespearian portions of *Sir Thomas More*.

In the first of Milton's lines, *neede* is given by both 1632 and 1640, and retained (*need*) in 1664. The change to *needs*, 1645, may have been made by Milton, but may quite as well be due to a perplexed printer. The anomalous *need(e)*, as 3rd pers. sing. pres. ind., was familiar in the earlier part of the century, and Milton himself employs it elsewhere—*Comus* 362,

What need a man forestall his date of grief?

In line 13, it is possible that *our* (1640) is no more than a printer's blunder for *her* (1632), due to the near neighbourhood of *our fancy*. Elsewhere, Milton has *our selves*, frequently, but of *our self* he furnishes no example. On the other hand, *our self* can be defended from other writers; and that Milton did not like *her selfe* is clear from the fact that, in 1645, he changed it to *it self*. I cannot agree with the editor of *Shakespeare's Centurie of Prayse* in thinking that, in 10, part (1632, 1664) is a misprint for *heart*. No doubt ‘each heart’ is prettier than ‘each part’; but ‘each part’, all the parts of us, heart and mind and fancy, gives a sense, if less obvious, equally good, and, I think, not less Miltonic (compare *P. L.* vi. 344 sq., ‘Spirits that live throughout Vital in every part’). What exactly in line 8 is the significance of the change from *lasting* (1632) to *live-long* (1640, 1645) it is not easy to say. Milton is,

so far as I can discover, the first writer to use the word *live-long* otherwise than in connexion with the words *night* and *day* (he uses it in that connexion in *L'Allegro* 99, 'till the live-long daylight fail'). Shakespeare uses it *only* in that connexion, and uses *lasting* constantly in the sense of *enduring, abiding*. What, with this change of *lasting* to *live-long*, is Milton after? I should suppose that this mighty master of sound is after sound, and nothing more; and that, for sound's sake, he has substituted, for a word nobler in sense, a word which, until he used it, carried a certain triviality in its associations. He has written *live-long*, in fact, for the same reason as impelled him, in line 6, to change *dull witnesse* to *weak witnes*. He liked *weak witnes* just for the reason that made him like, in *P. L.* iv. 856, 'wicked and thence weak', ib xi. 40, 'wither'd weak'; in *Sams Agon*. 834, 'wickedness is weakness', ib. 756, 'Virtue is weakness, which way to assail . . .'

Masson, than whose life of Milton no more mountainous monument was ever erected by industry to genius, indulges an interesting speculation about the occasion of Milton's lines. 'One might almost suppose', he says, '... that there was a proposal, in or about 1630, to erect a London monument to Shakespeare.' The Stratford monument was already in existence in 1623, or earlier. In the 1640 edition of Shakespeare's Poems, Milton's verses are immediately followed by the well-known verses of William Basse ('Renowned Spenser, lie a thought more nigh . . .'), verses written, like Milton's, in eight couplets. Basse's verses (first printed in 1633) imply the existence of the Stratford monument; and to Basse's verses there is a reference in the long poem of Ben Jonson prefixed to the first folio (1623). The first folio, moreover, contains, among its preliminary pages, a poem by L Digges, of which the opening lines mention the monument:

Shake-speare, at length thy pious fellowes give  
The world thy Workes, thy Workes by which out-live  
Thy Tombe thy name must: when that stone is rent,  
And Time dissolves thy Stratford Moniment,  
Here we alive shall view thee still.

Masson is thinking of a national monument; but I do not

know that we need look further than the Stratford monument. The second folio is, in effect, a page-for-page reprint of the first; only in the preliminary leaves is the pagination disturbed. On the title-page of the first folio was engraved the famous Droeshout portrait of Shakespeare. Facing this stood the lines in which Jonson bestows upon the engraver praises which have always been felt to be not merely exaggerated, but in almost all particulars undeserved. The Droeshout portrait reappears in the second folio, and Jonson's lines along with it. But not only Milton's verses, as Masson says, but another set of verses (like Milton's unsigned), which immediately precede them in the second folio, seem to have been written, not for a picture, but for a monument or statue. I mean the verses entitled 'Upon the Effigies of my worthy Friend, the Author William Shakespeare, and his Workes'. The verses are as follows:

Spectator, this Life[s] Shadow is ; To see  
The truer image, and a livelier he  
Turne Reader. But observe his Comicke vaine,  
Laugh, and proceed next to a Tragick straine,  
Then weepe ; So when thou find'st two contraries,  
Two different passions from thy rapt soule rise,  
Say (who alone effect such wonders could)  
Rare Shakespeare to the life thou dost behold.

That these lines were written for a statue, or half-statue, and not for a picture, seems to be indicated by the use, in the title, of the word *Effigies*, of which, applied to anything but statuary, the *Oxford Dictionary* furnishes no example either from this, or from an earlier, period; nor is Mr. Onions, the editor of the *Dictionary*, who has by him a number of passages which here supplement the *Dictionary*, able to furnish one. The word 'Spectator', again, is, I should suppose, more suited to a person looking at a statue than to one regarding a picture. The words 'Turne Reader', however, in line 3, show clearly that the Effigies, or Statue, is an effigies reproduced in a book. The earliest extant reproduction of the Stratford monument is Dugdale's, 1656. But there still survives a sketch of it made by Dugdale in 1634. That a reproduction of it may have

been contemplated for the second folio, two years earlier, is a suggestion which has nothing inherently improbable in it. It is, indeed, not impossible that Digges's lines of 1623 may have been written when the editors of the folio were not yet decided whether to reproduce, as their frontispiece, the unsatisfactory Droeshout portrait or the Stratford Effigies. If the Stratford bust was under consideration in 1632, it will follow that both Milton's lines and 'Spectator, this Life Shadow is . . .' were written expressly for the second folio, where they stand together on one page of a leaf (with blank *verso*) to which there is no corresponding leaf in the first folio, and were not attached to it by accident (as Milton's lines were to the 1640 Poems) after being written in some other connexion.

Milton himself, in 1645, dated the composition of his lines '1630'. I do not know that this is inconsistent with their having been written directly for the folio; but yet again, I do not know whether Milton's date can be relied on; other poets, notably Wordsworth, have repeatedly assigned mistaken dates to their compositions. At any rate I would not exclude the possibility of an error here upon Milton's part—for a reason which I think an interesting one. The closing lines of Milton's poem bear a resemblance so close as to be hardly accidental to three fine lines of Massinger (or Massinger and Field). If I may paraphrase Milton's last paragraph, every heart, he says, receiving the impress on itself of your oracular lines, becomes like an engraved monument; you replace the fancies of our own hearts by the too much conceiving which you teach them, numbing their powers, so that they become mere marble, a mere funeral stone, recording you. At the beginning of the second Act of *The Fatal Dowry* of Massinger and Field, Charalois, pronouncing the funeral eulogy of Rochfort, uses these words:

He cannot raise thee a poor monument; . . .  
Thy worth, in every heart, builds one,  
Making their friendly hearts thy funeral stone.

*The Fatal Dowry* was printed in the same year as the second folio of Shakespeare. When it was first acted we do not

know. Did Milton borrow from Massinger and Field, or they from Milton?

Milton, as is well known, was, like Vergil, like Keats, like many other great poets, a great, a magnificent, borrower. For the expression, in the fourteenth line of this sonnet, 'Dost make us marble . . .', his editors have cited, as they should, from *Il Penseroso* 42:

Forget thyself to marble;

but no one of them, so far as I know, has pointed to the source of *that*. It has its source, I think, in a Jacobean play, the *Albumazar* of Thomas Tomkins, a play first acted in 1614: .

*Wonder for me, admire and be astonished,  
Marvel thyself to marble . . .*

That is from *Albumazar* (I. iv. 3–4); and not only Milton's 'Forget thyself to marble', but also

*Thou in our wonder and astonishment . . .*

seems obviously built upon recollections of it.

That Milton knew *Albumazar* is, I think, certain from that passage of the *Apology for Smectymnuus* in which he speaks (ed. Bohn, p. 114) of 'Trinculoes buffoons and bawds'. Nobody who there studies the context (and reads *Albumazar*) is likely to suppose that the reference is to Shakespeare's *Tempest*, rather than to Tomkins's play. *Albumazar*, moreover, was a Cambridge play, first staged in March 1614. In that month and year it was acted before the king, together with the *Ignoramus* of Ruggles, a play to which, it is generally agreed, Milton makes reference elsewhere.

But the borrowings of poets are a process almost as mysterious as their originative creations; and I would not tie Milton to any single set of associations. A poet whose work he knew well was William Browne, of Tavistock; and when he wrote the lines on Shakespeare, he did so, I think, with some recollection of Browne's Epitaph on his Wife. The first four lines, at least, of Browne's poem should not have been missed by editors of Milton:

Thou need'st no tomb, my wife, for thou hast one,  
 To which all marble is but pumex stone ;  
 Thou art so deep engraved in my heart,  
 It shall outlast the strongest hand of art.

When, again, Milton wrote line 42 of *Il Pensero*, if he remembered *Albumazar*, he remembered also, I suspect, Browne's lines on the Countess of Pembroke :

Some kind woman, born as she,  
 Reading this, like Niobe  
 Shall turn marble, and become  
 Both her mourner and her tomb.

Poets borrow from themselves as well as from other poets, and in *Britannia's Pastorals*, I. iv. 183, we have the same thought :

No grave befits him but the hearts of men.

Perhaps to Browne, Carew, a little after Milton, was indebted for

His heart the tablet which alone  
 Is for that portrait the true stone.

I had thought that from Browne Milton might have taken also the epithet 'unvalued' ('unvalued book', line 11). Editors compare the expression 'unvalued jewels', from Shakespeare's *Richard III* (I. iv. 27), a play which Milton knew well—he quotes four lines from it in *Eikonoclastes*. But Milton, so far as the word 'unvalued' goes, might equally well have taken it from *Britannia's Pastorals*, where it occurs in the same sense, II. i. 158 :

Upon a jewel and unvalued prize.

Yet I suppose him, in fact, to have taken the complete phrase, 'unvalued book', from Chapman's postscript to his translation of the *Iliad* :

In which, repaid  
 With thine own value, go, unvalued book,  
 Live and be loved.

(Ed. Shepherd, p. 292.)

Chapman would appeal to Milton from the sententious

fervour of his morality; and I think it *possible* that we may trace to him at least one other phrase of Milton: In *Arcades* 84, the words 'smooth enamelled green' may be due to recollection of the expression 'enamelled meads' used by Chapman in *The Shadow of Night, Hymnus in Noctem*, p. 8, ed. Chatto and Windus.

Upon the question, how those readings which have hitherto been supposed to be amendments in his poem made by Milton when he prepared it for the press in 1645 found their way into the Shakespearian collection of 1640, I have said nothing. I have supposed Milton's lines to have been written directly for the second folio; but clearly it is not from the second folio that they passed to Benson's 1640 edition of the Poems of Shakespeare. Did Milton himself supply an amended version to Benson, or to Benson's printer, Cotes? Or did these employ some manuscript copy which had been circulating among Milton's friends, a copy in which the corrections of 1645 had already been made? The misprints suggest that Milton did not personally concern himself with the 1640 text. On the other hand, that text carries his initials, as 1632 did not. The spelling is, in essentials, that of 1632, that is to say, Milton's spelling, as that may be inferred from his autographs: a spelling different from that of his own edition of 1645.

In the year in which the first folio appeared Milton had written the two schoolboy renderings of the Psalms which are the earliest of his compositions that have survived to us. To the romantic conjunction which brings into the same year the first folio of Shakespeare and Milton's earliest Psalms attention was first called by the poet Clough; and he raised in connexion with it the question whether there was never a Milton who was somewhat like Shakespeare. That there was a Shakespeare who might easily, in some moods of him, pass into Milton, hardly needs saying. 'Upon the broad brows', Clough writes, 'and in the deep eyes of Shakespeare, I could believe myself to see . . . a mournful expression which might pass with ease into the fixed pure look of Milton, and could identify, under circumstances of no violent transmutation, the lips which uttered, "What, because thou art virtuous,

shall there be no cakes and ale ? aye, and ginger be hot in the mouth ?" with those of him who closed his drama with the sentence that

If Virtue feeble were,  
Heaven itself would stoop to her.'<sup>1</sup>

Certainly, it is easier to conceive the various temperament of Shakespeare approximating to Milton than it is to conceive the opposite transmutation. Nor does Clough anywhere seek to find in Milton the traces of a temperament crying out for cakes and ale and the hot feel of ginger in the mouth. Yet he says truly that much of Milton's earlier work shows 'the lineaments of a gentler and less positive, more natural and less merely moral character'; the features of a Milton 'pondering, examining, testing, as it were, upon his spiritual palate the viands of life, approximating . . . to that personal undramatic Shakespeare' who felt himself to have 'sold cheap what is most dear', the Shakespeare who wrote:

Poor soul the centre of my sinful earth.

Clough traces a likeness to the Shakespeare of the sonnets. Upon the Shakespeare of the sonnets Milton has left no record of his judgement. But upon the dramatic impersonal Shakespeare, he has left, not only the judgement of the 'Epitaph', but the famous tribute of *L'Allegro*, to

Sweetest Shakespeare, Fancy's child,  
Warbling his native wood-notes wild,

the Shakespeare of the romantic comedies. It is notable that, where, in *Il Penseroso*, he has occasion to speak of tragedy, he does not think fit to mention the supreme master of it. Nor, I think, in the 'Epitaph', is there any overt reference to the tragedies of Shakespeare. The 'too much conceaving' of which the 'Epitaph' speaks fits the 'conceits' of romantic comedy, and the expression 'fancy of itself bereaving' points

<sup>1</sup> *Lecture on the Development of English Literature—Prose Remains*, pp. 339–40. Upon Shakespeare, this lecture, admirable throughout, contains some of the noblest sentences which there are in our language. The lecture should be better known; as should also the essays upon Wordsworth and Matthew Arnold. The book is, I believe, out of print.

in the same direction: it is taken up, in the later *L'Allegro*, by the phrase 'Fancy's child'. In all this there is nothing remarkable; it is all, I think, what we should expect—both Milton's ability to appreciate comedy and his inability to appreciate contemporary tragedy.

The temperament of Milton was, no doubt, singularly humourless. But, like all persons who lack humour, Milton did not know it. Of this, any one may easily satisfy himself who cares to read the sixth of the Latin 'Prolusions'. Parts of this impudent college exercise are translated in Masson's *Life*; where, however, discreet asterisks mark the passages which Masson considered too Rabelaisian to render. The piece contains, in fact, a good deal that is coarse and indecent—in a fashion at once laboured and self-satisfied. But of genuine humour it has no jot. It is utterly void of humour; and at the same time utterly void of prudery. By prudery, in truth, the whole body of Puritanism was little troubled. Were it otherwise, not only would Milton's prose pamphlets have wanted the rather tired Juvenalian relish which distinguishes portions of them, but *Paradise Lost* itself would have lacked passages which are properly a part of it.

When I speak of prudery, I mean moral prudery. But there is another prudery—the literary—which Milton did not escape. In *Il Penseroso*, he speaks disparagingly of the tragedy of his own time:

Or what (*though rare*) of later age  
Ennobled hath the buskin'd stage.

Upon that the proper comment is to be sought from the preface to *Samson Agonistes* (written more than forty years later):

This is mentioned to vindicate tragedy from the small esteem, or rather infamy, which in the account of many it undergoes at this day with other common interludes; hap'ning through the Poets error of intermixing Comic stuff with Tragic sadness and gravity; or introducing trivial and vulgar persons.

Not only does that leave no room for Tragedy as Shakespeare and the Shakespearians understood it; but it excludes any possible compromise. Nor does it help us to urge the

forty years odd which separate the passage from *Il Penseroso*. Milton's manuscript book, in Trinity College, Cambridge, in which he has put together notes for a number of possible tragedies—notes which sufficiently indicate his conception of what all tragedy should be—belongs to a date removed by not more than a year or two from the date of *Il Penseroso*. The younger and the older Milton alike reject any conception of Tragedy wider than that allowed by Sidney's *Defence of Poesie*—which the preface to *Samson Agonistes*, in effect, quotes. The rejection is based upon prejudices which are not moral, but literary.

How Milton's lines on Shakespeare came to find a place in the second folio we have no means of knowing. Obviously, however, the book was one likely to have been seen, on its first appearance, by either Massinger or Field; and the possibility is not excluded that the *Fatal Dowry* may echo Milton, and not vice versa. It is interesting to speculate whether Milton may have had personal acquaintance with either, or both, of these dramatists, or with others of the epigoni of Shakespearian drama; or to what extent Milton was familiar, in youth, with the world of the London theatres. But I doubt if there is much to be made of these speculations. It is easy, I think, to make a great deal too much, in this connexion, of the first of the Latin elegies. The poem is mostly known for the reference which it contains to Milton's temporary rustication from Cambridge. In the opening lines he expresses the wish that the exile of Ovid—that favourite poet of his youth—had carried the consolations which he himself finds. Chief among these are the undisturbed enjoyment of poetry; his books, which are his very life; and the relaxation from study afforded by the theatres. I will give what he says in the fond, if not always faithful, version of Cowper:

For here I woo the Muse, with no controul;  
And here my books—my life—absorb me whole.  
Here too I visit, or to smile, or weep,  
The winding theatre's majestic sweep;  
The grave or gay colloquial scene recruits  
My spirits, spent in learning's long pursuits;

Whether some senior shrewd, or spendthrift heir,  
 Suitor, or soldier, now unarm'd, be there,  
 Or some coif'd brooder o'er a ten years' cause,  
 Thunder the Norman gibb'rish of the laws.  
 The lacquey, there, oft dupes the wary sire,  
 And, artful, speeds the enamour'd son's desire.  
 There, virgins oft, unconscious what they prove,  
 What love is, know not, yet, unknowing, love.  
 Or, if impassion'd Tragedy wield high  
 The bloody sceptre, give her locks to fly  
 Wild as the winds, and roll her haggard eye,  
 I gaze, and grieve, still cherishing my grief.  
 At times, e'en bitter tears yield sweet relief.  
 As when from bliss untasted torn away,  
 Some youth dies, hapless, on his bridal day,  
 Or when the ghost, sent back from shades below,  
 Fills the assassin's heart with vengeful woe,  
 When Troy, or Argos, the dire scene affords,  
 Or Creon's hall laments its guilty lords.

I call Cowper's version more fond than faithful. In one particular, it is definitely misleading. Where he speaks of

The winding theatre's majestic sweep,

Milton's Latin offers a phrase (*sinuosi pompa theatri*), which means something different—a phrase compounded out of phrases of Propertius and Ovid;<sup>1</sup> a phrase descriptive of a Roman theatre, and to any London theatre quite inappropriate. Consonant with that is the fact that, of the plays of which Milton speaks, perhaps only one is of a kind to have been seen on the London stage. Of the comedies glanced at, the themes are, with one exception, derived from Terence. The exception is given in the words which refer to the 'coif'd brooder o'er a ten years' cause'. Warton is, no doubt, right in seeing there an allusion to the *Ignoramus* of George Ruggle: a play, part Latin and part English, first performed in Cambridge, as we have already seen, together with *Albumazar*, on the occasion of King James's visit to that University in March 1614. There were five editions of it in the seventeenth,

<sup>1</sup> See, e. g., Prop. iv. i. 15; Ovid, *Ars. Amat.*, i. 103.

and another five in the eighteenth century. But it was an academic play; and it is, I think, extremely doubtful whether the same is not true of all the other plays to which Milton alludes. There are commentators, I know, who have discerned references, among the tragedies, to *Hamlet* and *Richard III*. But I am not sure that they have been sufficiently mindful of the close connexions between Senecan and Elizabethan drama—the ghost-play and revenge-play did not begin with Kyd. What Warton says of the references to comedy is, I think, of wider application—Milton is giving us ‘the view of a scholar’. Warton adds: ‘He does not recollect that he set out with describing a London theatre’. For myself, I am disposed to think that Milton did not, in fact, set out to describe anything of the kind. I am disposed to take this talk about the London theatres as not much more than convention. as merely Milton’s way of conveying to us, in Ovidian phrases, the fact that, from his more serious studies in poetry and learning, he sought relaxation in the reading of plays. Similarly, in *L’Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*, where he speaks of his fondness for drama, we are not obliged to think of the public stage. When *L’Allegro* speaks of Jonson and Shakespeare, I doubt whether Milton drew any hard and fast distinction between the ‘well-trod stage’, as he calls it, and the well-thumbed page. In *Il Penseroso*, it was certainly the latter which presented to him

Thebes or Pelops' line  
Or the tale of Troy divine.

Three years before Milton’s first volume of Poems appeared, Robert Hall, a son of the bishop and satirist, had obtained some knowledge of them. He speaks of Milton as a ‘carping poetaster’; and ‘he that would find him after dinner’, he writes, ‘must search the play-houses and bordelli’. Milton’s first Latin elegy might itself have furnished material for Hall’s malice. But he justifies what he says by some phrases used by Milton in the pamphlet attacking Bishop Hall—false beards, periwigs, tires, cases, vizards, night-walking cudgellers. It was not necessary, Milton rejoins, that, for such knowledge as these phrases betray of the manners and language of the

playhouse, he should have gone outside the University of Cambridge. He could see there, and had seen, men who were now doctors of divinity 'writhing and unboning their clergy limbs to all the antics of buffoons', as they 'acted and over-acted' plays pleasant and unpleasant, in the college halls. That is, perhaps, not more than good fun—better fun, certainly, than Milton mostly has at hand. Yet I am not sure that it does not come near exhausting Milton's acquaintance with the *Realien* of the stage.<sup>1</sup>

In respect of the celebrated passage of *Eikonoclastes* which refers to Shakespeare as 'the closest companion' of the 'solitudes' of King Charles' imprisonment, I do not know that there is much to be said either for or against Milton. It is implied that a pious king might better employ his last days than in reading a popular modern tragedian—a sentiment to which, in the abstract, exception cannot fairly be taken. Milton, says Warton, 'seduced by the gentle eloquence of fanaticism, listened no longer to the wild and native wood-notes of fancy's sweetest child'. But the context shows, I think, that Milton is thinking primarily, not of the Shakespeare of the romantic comedies, but of Shakespeare the tragedian—he quotes *Richard III*. It is hard to blame him if, in 1650, he thought no better of the tragedies of Shakespeare than in 1630. At least we cannot point certainly to any passage in the works of the youthful Milton which praises Shakespeare the tragedian.

H. W. GARROD.

<sup>1</sup> The tactics of the jibe are doubtful, for they diminish the force of Milton's rejoinder upon the subject of his expulsion from Cambridge. When he comes to that topic, the play-acting dons are changed to 'courteous and learned men', 'who, at my parting from them, after I had taken two degrees . . . signified many ways how much better it would content them that I should stay'.

## THE ASSOCIATIONS OF THOMAS LOVE PEACOCK WITH WALES

ONE of the many forms which the Romantic movement took was a growth of interest in mountain scenery and also in history, traditions, and literature other than those of Greece and Rome. Sometimes these interests were combined, and hence the steady increase in the number of tourists who ventured into Wales, particularly into Snowdonia, as the eighteenth century drew to a close. Not infrequently there was added a Rousseauistic belief in these regions as the abode of a people untouched by the taint of city life and unshackled by the bonds of tyranny. It is significant that the Pantisocrats, failing to carry out their project of a settlement in the New World, should choose Wales as the second best. The names of most of the early nineteenth-century writers are connected with Wales. Coleridge, Southey, Shelley, Wordsworth, De Quincey, Hazlitt, Landor, and Cary all visited it at one time or another, the journeys of the later comers being greatly facilitated by the new roads which had made the remote mountain fastnesses more accessible.

To this list of travellers in Wales we must add the name of Thomas Love Peacock. A devotee of solitude and of the open road, he visited Scotland in 1806, and in 1809 he walked up the Thames valley to the head of the river. Early in the following year we find him in Wales, whither he had evidently come unprepared for a lengthy stay, because later, when his plans had been modified by the beauty of the scenery, his books and clothes had to be sent on to him. We first hear of him at Tremadoc, whence he proceeded to Maentwrog in Merionethshire. If Peacock had desired solitude, here was what he had sought—a remote hamlet which at that time

consisted of seven houses only. The secluded valley to which he had penetrated was one of the most beautiful in Wales, running down to the sea in one direction and on all other sides embosomed in mountains. When Joseph Hucks and the poet Coleridge spent two days there in 1794, they could hardly tear themselves away from it, and Penruddock Wyndham, one of the earliest tourists, writing in 1775, had said: 'The Vale of Maentwrog in Merionethshire would afford a charming retreat for a painter delighting in romantic nature, as its environs abound with scenes every way picturesque. Woody hills, naked mountains, rocky rivers, foaming cataracts, transparent lakes, ruined castles, catch the eye on every side of this sequestered spot, which seems to want nothing but fine weather and a serene sky to afford as rich studies as the neighbourhood of Tivoli or Frascati.' The qualification is not without importance, as many a luckless tourist in a rainy summer has found to his sorrow, but Peacock's admiration knew no reserve. In spite of the gloom of winter, he was enchanted by the scene. He roamed through the dense oak woods which clothed the hill-sides, watched the clear streams and listened to the roaring waterfalls. When he had explored the vale of Ffestiniog, he went farther afield in Merioneth and the neighbouring county of Carnarvon.

Echoes of this first mood of rapture are heard in *The Philosophy of Melancholy*, published in 1812. Here he draws a picture of the rock-bound coast of Carnarvonshire, whose caves are filled with the ceaseless tumult of the waves, and of the impetuous mountain torrents of Merionethshire, where

The rock-set ash, with tortuous branches grey,  
Veils the deep glen, and drinks the flying spray.

He describes them, swollen with autumn rains, whirling stones and trees irresistibly before them in their headlong course to the sea. And yet again he shows them under a calm, sunlit sky in the grip of frost, the rocks covered with a sheet of frozen foam and the overhanging trees bespangled with icicles. In the same poem occurs another passage portraying the havoc wrought in the valleys by the melting snows of winter, which, though Peacock does not expressly say so, was

most likely yet another reminiscence of his stay in Wales. He recalls, too, how he stood on the lonely heights of Moelwyn and Cader Idris, while the clouds alternately veiled and revealed the world below. A visit to Harlech Castle is likewise mentioned, where, at the fall of evening, he listened to the plaintive surge of the sea in the distance, while the wind played with the ivy of the mouldering court and obscure forms flitted to and fro in the twilight. In yet another twilight scene he pictures a mountain lake which those who know Wales will be able to place in its proper setting. It is an evening of perfect tranquillity :

When not a ripple strikes the pebbly bay,  
When the reflected rock lies dark and still,  
And the light larch scarce trembles on the hill.

In a letter to his friend Hookham, dated 22 March 1810, Peacock says that he has tried to bear in mind the old bardic triad which lays down that a poet should have an eye that can see Nature, a heart that can feel Nature, and a resolution that dares follow Nature. If all Peacock's excursions were as foolhardy as the one which he then proceeds to narrate, his guardian angel must have had his hands full. With a few friends he set out a little before midnight for the Rhaiadr Du, or Black Cataract, about a mile from Maentwrog. The sides of the fall being all but perpendicular and covered with hanging oak and hazel, it was considered dangerous to climb to the top, and there was much head-shaking when Peacock's party took to the road. Peacock himself saw nothing in it, for he had repeatedly climbed the rock, and although on this occasion the ascent was to be made by night, they had a brilliant full moon to guide them. Nevertheless the expedition nearly had a fatal ending. One of Peacock's companions, John Gryffyd, grasped a rotten branch which gave way and hurled him down some fifteen feet, when luckily a hazel caught him and saved his life. It is possible that Peacock had this adventure in mind when he afterwards described the fall of Mr. Cranium in *Headlong Hull*.

A man of good position and education, connected with the leading families of the county, and a graduate of Jesus College,

Oxford, this Mr. Gryffydh was the rector of Festiniog and Maentwrog, whose daughter Jane later became Peacock's wife<sup>1</sup>. Whatever Peacock's feelings towards the daughter at this time, he speaks very unflatteringly of the father as 'a little dumpy, drunken mountain-goat'. It is said that he afterwards caricatured Gryffydh in his incomplete romance *Calidore*. This tells how King Arthur, instead of dying, sails away with Merlin to an island where Pan and Bacchus reign. He anxiously awaits the day for his return and occasionally sends a messenger to Britain to see whether the time is ripe. Thus Calidore lands in Wales and meets Miss ap Nanny and her sister, the daughters of the vicar of Llanglasrhyd. He spends the evening in the company of the vicar and the rector of Bwlchpenmach, both of whom drink in a manner worthy of Fielding's characters. The vicar of Llanglasrhyd no doubt had his prototype in Mr. Gryffydh, and it was evidently disgust with such excessive conviviality that was responsible, in part at least, for the composition of Peacock's 'Farewell to Meirion', which seems to have been written

<sup>1</sup> As Peacock's biographers have omitted to give details of this family, it may be appropriate to insert them here. The father of John Gryffydh was Evan Gryffydh of Cynfal and Tanygrisiau in Merionethshire, while his mother was Catherine, daughter of Ellis Anwyl of Parkia, Criccieth. When John matriculated from Jesus College, Oxford, on 8 April 1772, he was described as being of Criccieth. He graduated in 1776, but does not appear to have taken his doctorate, as one might think from the title usually given him by Peacock. On 21 Sept. 1776 he was ordained as deacon, and on 20 Sept. 1778 as priest, in Bangor Cathedral. First of all curate of Festiniog, he became rector of Festiniog and Maentwrog on 18 Sept. 1787. On 10 May 1779 he had married Mary Anwyl, the relict of Evan Griffith of Tan-y-bwlch, who had been High Sheriff of Merionethshire in 1770-1. She was buried on 12 Jan. 1781, and on 1 Oct. 1783 John Gryffydh married Ellinor, the daughter of the Rev. David Morris, who had been rector of Festiniog and had died in the spring of 1782. By his first wife John Gryffydh had no issue, but his second wife gave birth to the following children: Anne, baptized 27 July 1784; Evan, baptized 14 Dec. 1785; Catherine, baptized 25 March 1787, died 10 Nov. 1795; Ellinor, baptized 3 Dec. 1788; Jane, baptized 6 Dec. 1789, died 1852; David, baptized 28 May 1792. John Gryffydh resided at Tan-y-bwlch, later at Cynfal, and afterwards at Cae'n y Coed. He died on 24 August 1812.

about 1811, when he went back to England. In this poem he declares that the natural charms of Merioneth can no longer detain him ; he is weary of fanatic frenzy, ignorance, inhospitality, lies, folly, and falsehood, and so he will flee for ever from this region where Bacchus reels through all the fields. Some light is thrown on the views here set forth by a letter of Shelley's addressed to Hookham on 3 December 1812. After referring to the irregularity of the coaches in those mountain solitudes, he says :

I have read Mr. Peacock's verses. Independently of their poetical merit, they are accurately descriptive of the exquisite souls by whom I am encompassed. Bigotry is so universally pervading that the best are deeply tainted. I was speaking of Mr. Peacock to a lady who knew him during his residence in Wales. In many respects she is a woman of considerable merit : and except in religious matters a model of toleration. 'Oh !' said she, 'there Mr. Peacock lived in a cottage near Tan y bwlch, associating with no one, and hiding his head like a murderer ; but', she added, altering her voice to a tone of appropriate gravity, 'he was *worse than that*, he was an *Atheist*.' I exclaimed much against the intolerance of her remark, without producing the slightest effect. She knows very well that I am an infidel and a democrat, but perhaps she *does not do me justice*. There is more philosophy in one square inch of your counter than in the whole of Cambria ; it is the last stronghold of the most vulgar and commonplace prejudices of aristocracy. Lawyers of unexampled villainy rule and grind the poor whilst they cheat the rich : the peasants are mere serfs and are fed and lodged worse than pigs, the gentry have all the ferocity and despotism of the ancient barons without their dignity and chivalric disdain of shame or danger. The poor are as abject as Samoyeds, the rich as tyrannic as Bashaws.

The mood of the 'Farewell to Meirion' was, however, merely transitory, as may be seen from Peacock's later visits to Wales, in spite of the resolve here expressed. Indeed he had good reason to feel affection for Wales, not only because of the natural beauties which he so ardently admired, but also because of his attachment to Jane Gryffyd. We hear of her in a letter of Peacock's dated 12 June 1810, the 'Caernarvon-

shire nymph' having delighted the young writer, who was planning a tragedy on the Emperor Otho, by her discourse on such soaring themes as the careers of 'this ruler, Scipio, and Hannibal. Though strongly attracted by the 'most innocent, the most amiable, the most beautiful girl in existence', Peacock seems to have struggled against this growing affection. 'It is now a month since I saw her', he told Hookham on 12 June, 'and Richard is himself again.' How unwillingly he parted from her is narrated in a letter to his friend on 9 April 1811. Knowing these facts, we cannot fail to identify the fair musician mentioned in *The Philosophy of Melancholy*. Is it fanciful to interpret the following lines as a reminiscence of Jane Gryffydh singing her sad, haunting Welsh melodies to the accompaniment of the harp? Having praised the power of love, the poet exclaims:

May that fair form, ah! now too far remote!  
Whose glossy locks on ocean-breezes float;  
That tender voice, whose rapture-breathing thrill,  
Unheard so long, in fancy vibrates still;  
That Parian hand, that draws with artless fire,  
The soul of music from her mountain-lyre;  
Led by thy planet from the billowy shore,  
Resume these groves, and never leave them more.

. . . . .

The plaintive minstrel's legendary strain  
One added charm of softest power shall gain,  
When she, whose heart thy purest fount supplies,  
Bids thy own songs, oh, Melancholy! rise.

Eight years passed and, though Peacock returned to Wales, he never saw Jane Gryffydh. On 20 November 1819, however, six months after his appointment to a position in the East India Company had given him financial security, he wrote to her, making an offer of marriage. Such a proposal, coming so unexpectedly after all these years, was a source of perturbation to Miss Gryffydh, who was at first somewhat embarrassed for an answer. But finally she assented and the wedding took place at Llanfihangel Geneu'r Glyn in Cardiganshire. The romance of Peacock's early days was thus con-

summated. His happiness was such that his letters to Shelley became less frequent, and the latter, writing in 1820 to Maria Gisborne on her return to England, referred to his friend as follows :

And there  
Is English Peacock, with his mountain fair,  
Turned into a Flamingo—that shy bird  
That gleams in the Indian air;—have you not heard  
When a man marries, dies, or turns Hindoo,  
His best friends hear no more of him?—but you  
Will see him and will like him too, I hope,  
With the milk-white Snowdonian Antelope  
Matched with this Camelopard.

It is not known with certainty how long Peacock's first residence in Wales lasted. There seems to be no evidence to show whether he stayed from the beginning of 1810 until the spring of 1811 or whether in the meantime he went back to England. We have a letter to Hookham from Maentwrog on 18 August 1810, but after this occurs a gap in the correspondence, and where Peacock spent the following winter is a matter for conjecture.

His movements on leaving Maentwrog in the spring of 1811 can, however, be traced in his correspondence. He walked to Dolgelley and on the next day he reached the little lake called Talyllyn, whence, in the company of an original character who combined the functions of schoolmaster, guide, and landlord of a small inn, he ascended Cader Idris. Peacock was profoundly impressed by the spectacle below and around him. He says: 'The view from the summit of the mountain baffles description. It is the very sublimity of Nature's wildest magnificence. Beneath, the whole extent of Cardigan Bay; to the right, the immense chain of the Snowdonian mountains, partly smiling in sunshine, partly muffled in flying storm, to the left, the wide expanse of the southern principality, with all its mountain summits.' The same night Peacock set out in the moonlight for Machynlleth whence he wrote to Hookham on 9 April, saying that he intended to pass on through Towyn to South Wales. It is easy to read between the lines

the intoxication which had seized him. In spite of the sad leave-taking that he had just behind him, he pressed on with the vigorous and care-free step of youth in the freshness of early spring amid the Welsh mountains. His *Wanderlust* reminds one of another enthusiast who years later explored the same district—George Borrow.

Peacock visited North Wales again in the summer of 1813, when he heard much talk about the supposed attempt on Shelley's life at Tanyrallt, near Tremadoc. After listening to all the particulars, Peacock came to the conclusion, as did many others after him, that Shelley was labouring under a delusion. In this connexion we may recall that Peacock once stayed for a day at Rhayader in Radnorshire to see Nant Gwillt, where Shelley resided in 1812. Like his friend, Peacock was struck by the beauty of the valley, which is described in Shelley's 'Cwm Elan'. In later life, as his granddaughter's memoir informs us, Peacock made frequent walking-tours in Wales, the land to which he was bound by such intimate and happy memories.

There are grounds for thinking that, even at the time of Peacock's early acquaintance with Wales, his interests were by no means limited to its natural beauties. Attention has already been drawn to the triad that he quotes to Hookham, and it would seem that he had also read the poems of the ancient bard, Llywarch Hên. In a letter, dated 9 April 1811, he mentions that on his walking-tour he has with him 'Luarch' and Tacitus. Mr. C. van Doren, to whose admirable *Life* the present writer, like all other students of Peacock, is necessarily under a deep obligation, explains 'Luarch' as an error for Luath, the name of Peacock's dog. It appears more likely that it is an Anglicized form of Llywarch, for there are indications in Peacock's writings that he was familiar with the edition of Llywarch's works by William Owen, in which the Welsh original and an English translation were given. A reference in *The Philosophy of Melancholy* to Giraldus Cambrensis bears witness to Peacock's knowledge of Welsh antiquities. In the same poem he alludes to the famous lines of Lewis Morris in praise of the women of Merioneth, which

he may have come across either in the original edition of 1763 or in Edward Jones's *Musical and Poetic Relicks of the Welsh Bards*.

In the first novel that he wrote Peacock's knowledge and love of Wales found expression. The scene of *Headlong Hall*, published in 1816, is laid in the vale of Llanberis, and in it we encounter the same enthusiasm for the mountain scenery of North Wales as we have already traced in his poems and letters. Though words can never adequately describe the sublime sight that met the eyes of the three philosophers, Mr. Escot, Mr. Foster, and Mr. Jenkison, on their walk from Headlong Hall to Tremadoc, Peacock manages to convey something of its grandeur. His account of the Traeth Mawr and the embankment, the construction of which had been made possible by the ardour of Madocks and Shelley, paints a memorable picture of a scene that is now greatly changed. It is important, too, because we may see in it a first sketch of the broken embankment in *The Misfortunes of Elphin*. Emerging from the vale of Llanberis, the three companions passed through Beddgelert and the pass of Aberglaslyn and thence proceeded

along the edge of the Traeth Mawr, a vast arm of the sea, which they then beheld in all the magnificence of the flowing tide. Another five miles brought them to the embankment, which has since been completed, and which, by connecting the two counties of Meirionydd and Caernarvon, excludes the sea from an extensive tract. The embankment, which was carried on at the same time from both the opposite coasts, was then very nearly meeting in the centre. They walked to the extremity of that part of it which was thrown out from the Caernarvonshire shore. The tide was now ebbing: it had filled the vast basin within, forming a lake about five miles in length and more than one in breadth. As they looked upwards with their backs to the open sea, they beheld a scene which no other in this country can parallel, and which the admirers of the magnificence of nature will ever remember with regret, whatever consolation may be derived from the probable utility of the works which have excluded the waters from their ancient receptacle. Vast rocks and precipices, intersected with little torrents, formed the barrier

on the left ; on the right, the triple summit of Moelwyn reared its majestic boundary : in the depth was that sea of mountains, the wild and stormy outline of the Snowdonian chain, with the giant Wyddfa towering in the midst. The mountain-frame remains unchanged, unchangeable ; but the liquid mirror it enclosed is gone. The tide ebbed with rapidity ; the waters within, restrained by the embankment, poured through its two points an impetuous cataract, curling and boiling in innumerable eddies, and making a tumultuous melody admirably in unison with the surrounding scene.

In *Headlong Hall* Peacock also tries his prentice hand at a ballad, describing the fortunes of a native of Merionethshire who returned home after many years' service in the army. The poem, slight though its intrinsic merit may be, is of interest as showing Peacock's insight into the Welshman's passionate attachment to his language and his country. In one stanza the soldier says :

O rich are the feasts in the Englishman's hall,  
And the wine sparkles bright in the goblets of Gaul :  
But their mingled attractions I well could withstand,  
For the milk and the oatcake of Meirion's dear land.

These lines seem like a distant echo from a poem by a seventeenth-century Welsh poet, Huw Llwyd. The parallel is not so close that one can dogmatize about it, and the whole may be merely a coincidence. But, as Huw Llwyd resided at Cynfal, which was afterwards the home of Peacock's father-in-law, it is not difficult to see how Peacock might have been drawn to the work of the Welsh bard.

To add a little local colour, Peacock likewise uses Welsh legendary lore, such as the tradition of the fiddler in the sea-caves of Tremadoc or the old sexton's tale of how Nanny Llwyd the witch would raise the devil, and how, while digging her grave, he kept Satan away by fastening two cocks to her tombstone. But while these passages illustrate Peacock's familiarity with Welsh names and superstitions, there is nothing in *Headlong Hall* to indicate any great intimacy on his part with Welsh literature.

Nor does his unfinished romance *Calidore*, which seems

to have been written about 1816, mark an advance in this respect. No profound knowledge of the literature of Wales was needed to suggest this burlesque treatment of Arthur. The same is true of 'The Round Table', to which the date 1819 is usually assigned. It tells how Arthur inquires of Merlin when he will be able to return to Britain. The enchanter answers that 370 years more must pass, but in the meantime he will summon from the dead all the successors of Arthur on the British throne. The various monarchs then appear, and we are privileged to hear Arthur's comments on each. The rollicking rhythm and burlesque humour of the opening lines are characteristic of Peacock.

King Arthur sat down by the lonely sea-coast,  
As thin as a lath, and as pale as a ghost:  
He looked on the east, and the west, and the south,  
With a tear in his eye, and a pipe in his mouth;  
And he said to old Meilin, who near him did stand,  
Drawing circles, triangles, and squares on the sand,  
'Sure nothing more dismal and tedious could be,  
Than to sit always smoking and watching the sea:  
Say when shall the fates re-establish my reign,  
And spread my Round Table in Britain again.'

The appearance of *The Misfortunes of Elphin* in 1829 marked an entirely new phase. It is evident that by this time Peacock was steeped in ancient Welsh literature. Much of it was accessible in translations, which stood him in good stead. Nevertheless, a careful study of the novel demonstrates that at times he must have had recourse to the originals. In view of Peacock's marriage to Jane Gryffyd nine years before, we are surely justified in thinking that this new development was in a considerable measure due to her influence.

However, before passing to *The Misfortunes of Elphin*, it will be convenient to say a word of Peacock's next novel, *Crotchet Castle*. The scene is laid in Merionethshire, 'the land of all that is beautiful in nature, and all that is lovely in woman'. It will be remembered how Miss Susannah Touchandgo, disappointed by her engagement being broken off, retires to the hills of Merionethshire for consolation. In

the house of a farmer, for whom Peacock has invented the grotesque name of ap Llymry (son of flummery), she thrives on wholesome rustic fare, which the author describes with the zest of a man who has himself tasted and enjoyed it. Peacock avails himself of this opportunity to portray the interior of a Welsh cottage, with the singing to the harp which in his day was not yet a vanished custom. In the eleventh chapter he makes Miss Touchandgo send to her exiled father a translation of 'pennillion', or stanzas sung to the harp:

Beyond the sea, beyond the sea,  
My heart is gone, far, far from me;  
And ever in its track will flee  
My thoughts, my dreams, beyond the sea.

Such lines are altogether in harmony with Welsh literary tradition, and it would not be difficult to point out 'pennillion' similar in theme and sentiment. But it would be asking too much of Peacock to expect him to remain serious for long. His mocking humour will out, and finds vent in the account of the Green Bard of Cadair Idris, so styled because of his waist-coat embroidered with leeks, and yet again in that delightful poem, 'The Pool of the Diving Friar'.

While this appears to be the product of Peacock's fancy, the stanza in praise of the hills of Merioneth prefixed to the fifteenth chapter is evidently a genuine translation from the Welsh. Here was at least one thing about which Peacock never spoke with his tongue in his cheek—his passion for the scenery of North Wales. Those who know it and love it as he did will always find pleasure in the description of the 'narrow winding pass, between high and naked rocks', along which Mr. Chainmail made his way to a lake 'which lay like a dark mirror, set in a gigantic frame of mountain precipices'. How clearly the scene rises before us as we read on:

He sat down on a large smooth stone ; the faint murmur of the stream he had quitted, the occasional flapping of the wings of the heron, and at long intervals the solitary springing of a trout, were the only sounds that came to his ear. The sun shone brightly half-way down the opposite rocks, presenting, on their irregular faces, strong masses of light and shade.

Not less vivid is the picture of the lonely torrent :

A cataract fell in a single sheet into the pool ; the pool boiled and bubbled at the base of the fall, but through the greater part of its extent lay calm, deep, and black, as if the cataract had plunged through it to an unimaginable depth without disturbing its eternal repose. At the opposite extremity of the pool, the rocks almost met at their summits, the trees of the opposite banks almost intermingled their leaves, and another cataract plunged from the pool into a chasm on which the sunbeams never gleamed. High above, on both sides, the steep woody slopes of the dingle soared into the sky ; and from a fissure in the rock, on which the little path terminated, a single gnarled and twisted oak stretched itself over the pool.

When all is said, however, the work which has indissolubly linked the name of Peacock with Wales is *The Misfortunes of Elphin*. In it the author has woven together three different stories, that of Seithenyn, that of Taliesin, and that of Arthur, Gwenyvar, and Melvas. It will perhaps be most convenient to deal with each in turn

The story of Seithenyn is based on one of the best-known legends in Welsh literature. It goes back to a short poem written about the year 1200, of which a translation is given below.<sup>1</sup> Sir John Rhys regards this as one of a group of

<sup>1</sup> Seithenyn, stand thou forth  
And see the raging of the main—  
Gwyddno's plain is covered.

Accursed be the maiden  
Who after supping let it loose,  
The well-servant of the furious sea.

Accursed be the spinster  
Who after battle let it loose,  
The well-servant of the waste sea.

Mererid's cry from a castle rampart  
Even to God is it sent aloft:  
After pride comes long death.

Mererid's cry from a castle rampart to-day  
Even to God her song of expiation:  
After pride comes repentance.

stories about a magic well, which, owing to the carelessness of a woman in leaving it uncovered, overflows and causes an inundation. Undoubtedly the maiden Mererid is instrumental in bringing about the disaster, but the rest is obscure. Apparently the sea bursts upon the dwellers in the plain of Gwyddno as a punishment for the insolent pride with which they give themselves up to feasting and revelry after a successful battle. To what extent Seithenyn bears the responsibility is not clear, but after the calamity he is summoned forth to gaze at the ruin wrought by the waters.<sup>1</sup>

The 'Pedigrees of the Saints', composed about 1200, give a little more information. In one pedigree three saints are mentioned as being the sons of 'King Seithenyn whose land the sea overwhelmed in the Plain of Gwyddno'. In two others

Mererid's cry fills me to-night,  
Nor can I readily prosper.  
After pride comes a downfall.

Mererid's cry over wines:  
The handsome, bountiful man is God's creation:  
After excess comes privation.

Mererid's cry forces me to-night  
Away from my chamber:  
After pride comes long death.

The grave of Seithenyn of the feeble understanding  
Is between Kenedyr's Fort and the shore,  
With that of Môr the Splendid and Kynran.

(Translated by Sir John Rhys, and revised by Prof. Ifor Williams.)

<sup>1</sup> Cf. J. E. Lloyd, *History of Wales*, vol. i, p. 25, note. Prof. Ifor Williams points out that in Brittany a similar tradition exists at the present day. It tells how the city of Is, the capital of Gradlon the Great, King of Cornwall, was submerged. Built on piles, it was guarded against the sea by dikes and sluices. Its inhabitants abandoned themselves to drunkenness and other vices, as a punishment for which the sea burst over them. The immediate cause of the flood is said to have been Dahut, the king's daughter. When the waters began to advance, Gradlon mounted his steed and placed Dahut behind him. However quickly he rode, the sea followed even faster. Then a voice from heaven commanded him to cast the wicked Dahut into the waves, which he did. Elsewhere in Breton legends Dahut appears as a sort of mermaid who lures men to death.

Seithenyn is styled 'King Seithenyn of the Plain of Gwyddno'. Coming to the fifteenth century we find the submerged lands alluded to as the territory of Gwyddno Garanhir. Gutto'r Glyn, who flourished about 1450, speaks of 'the lament of Gwyddno Garanhir, over whose land God turned the sea',<sup>1</sup> and Lewis Morganwg, who lived in the first half of the sixteenth century, knew the tradition in the same form. He tells how 'the great land of Garanhir and his castle sank into the water with his chattels and his clan'.

It seems to have been Robert Vaughan of Hengwrt, a famous Welsh antiquary of the earlier part of the seventeenth century, who first thought of connecting the story of the inundated land with the ridge of rounded stones near Harlech called Sarn Badrig. This ridge runs out into the sea for some fifteen miles and is exposed for a considerable distance at low tide. One tradition, as the name Sarn Badrig indicates, declares that this was St. Patrick's road to Ireland, but Robert Vaughan's imaginative eye saw in it 'a great stone-wall, made as a fence against the sea'. Here we have the genesis of the notion that the low-lying country now buried beneath the waves of Cardigan Bay was once protected by a mighty embankment. Lewis Morris in the eighteenth century continued the good work and built up a succession of embankments, fully equipped with sluices. 'It seems', he says, 'there were dams between it and the sea, and that by drunkenness the flood-gates were left open.'

The eighteenth century also saw the part of Seithenyn in the disastrous inundation more fully explained. For this we must turn to the third series of triads, which may represent an older tradition, but how old it is and to what extent popular is uncertain. Here we read of the Three Arrant Drunkards of the Isle of Britain, the third being 'Seithenyn the Drunkard, the son of Seithyn Saidi, King of Dyved, who, in his drink,

<sup>1</sup> The original Welsh was quoted by Edward Jones in his *Bardic Museum* (1802), p. 17, note, and in 1824 T. J. L. Pritchard's *Land Beneath the Sea* reproduced the same lines from Carlisle's *Topographical Dictionary* and Meyrick's *Cardigan*. Five years later Peacock cited them in *The Misfortunes of Elphin*.

let the sea over the Cantrev y Gwaelawd, so that there were lost of houses and earth the whole that were there, where formerly were found sixteen fortified towns, superior to all the towns and cities of Wales, leaving as an exception Caer Llion upon Wysg', and, the triad continues, 'Cantrev y Gwaelawd was the dominion of Gwyddnaw Garanhir, King of Ceredigion; and that event was in the time of Emrys Wledig; and the men who escaped from that inundation landed in Arduddy and the country of Arvon, and the mountains of Eryri, and other places not before mentioned' It will be observed that the lands are those of Gwyddno Garanhir, that Seithenyn bears the entire responsibility, the magic well and the well-maiden having vanished, that Seithenyn's negligence was due to drink, but that the way in which he let the sea in is not stated. It was left for William Owen to unite the various motives of the legend current in his time, when in the *Cambrian Biography* (1803) he asserted that Seithenyn left the flood-gates open in a fit of intoxication

Such was the growth of the old tale that Peacock found to hand when he undertook *The Misfortunes of Elphin*. His chief source seems to have been the bardic triad already quoted, which was accessible in the *Cumbro-Briton*, and this work, as we happen to know, was in Peacock's possession. Possibly Edward Jones's *Bardic Museum* gave him some further information and the introduction to T J. L. Prichard's *Land Beneath the Sea* (1824) may also have contributed to his knowledge, though there is no evidence that Peacock was acquainted with it<sup>1</sup> The developments which the legend received at Peacock's hands are largely due to the connexion

<sup>1</sup> The poem itself is certainly not inspiring; witness the opening lines:

And thou art lost beneath the waters—  
Once loveliest of Cymru's daughters!—  
Thou flosculous and fruitful fair one!  
The sun has wept his perish'd rare one,  
As weeps the heart-rent widow'd lover—  
His chosen maid whose smiles are over:—  
And never in his circuit ample  
Since has he seen so sweet a sample  
Of earthly charms—the pride of nature!

that he wished to establish between Seithenyn and Taliesin and Melvas, or to the necessity of rendering his narrative vivid and convincing. Hence the many details, the watch-tower, the sonorous title Lord High Commissioner of Royal Embankment, the mysterious warning of Gwenhidwy, Seithenyn's daughter Angharad, his bard, and his colleague Teithrin ap Tathral, the striking descriptions of Nature, the escape of Seithenyn on barrels which he himself had emptied, his service under Ednyfed and later under Melvas, his intervention on behalf of Gwenyvar, and the happy close of his career, as second butler to King Arthur.

In harmony with his sources Peacock ascribes the inundation of the great plain of Gwaelod to the sixth century. Geological evidence supports the old tale of the flooded lands, and one may perhaps regard the legend as an echo from the time of the catastrophe. But science believes that time to have been far more remote than Peacock imagined, possibly as far back as some three or four thousand years ago. In any case, the embankment and the office of Seithenyn are but a figment of the modern mind.

The second element in the plot of *The Misfortunes of Elphin* is connected with Taliesin. For this the *Hanes Tuliesin*, or 'History of Taliesin', as we know it, was not accessible to Peacock. He therefore had to derive his knowledge of it piecemeal from whatever sources were available. As early as 1764 Evan Evans, who complained of the difficulty of obtaining a complete copy of Taliesin's work, had translated a short passage of the 'Consolation of Elphin' and had given some details of Taliesin's life. A fragment was printed in the *Myvyriun Archuiology*, and the same work contained various songs from the tale, while Edward Jones in his *Bardic Museum* had given a condensed account of the *Hanes Tuliesin*.<sup>1</sup> It is on these two last authorities that Peacock seems in the main

<sup>1</sup> The part referring to the finding of Taliesin had been translated and annotated by Edward Davies in *The Mythology and Rites of the Druids* (1809), and a description of his poem on transmigration was also to be found in T. J. L. Prichard's *Land Beneath the Sea*. There is, however, no conclusive evidence that Peacock used these authorities.

to have relied. The complete tale cannot have been known to him, for it was not published in anything like its entirety until it appeared in the *Cambrian Quarterly* in 1833. Internal evidence supports this view, the most important fact being that Peacock speaks of the *Hanes Taliesin* as a poem.

In his account of the birth and finding of Taliesin, of his connexion with Elphin, and his appearance at the court of Maelgon, Peacock followed the *Hanes Taliesin*, but not slavishly. He had a distaste for anything miraculous or supernatural, and in his adaptation either eliminated it or referred to it with a sceptical smile. Indeed, in the whole of his narrative there is little of the supernatural except the warning of Gwenhidwy. A feature invented by Peacock is the love of Taliesin for Melanghel amid the wild streams and mountains of Merionethshire, a part of the novel which, on account of the setting of his own romantic youthful interlude, gave him obvious delight. The plot is also modified by the captivity of Rhün in the rocky cave and the prolongation of Elphin's imprisonment at Diganwy. Peacock's object in making these latter changes was to provide a motive for Taliesin's visit to the court of Arthur, and so to link the second element of the plot with the third, the story of Arthur and Melvas.

The episode which describes how Melvas carried off the beautiful Gwenyvar, and how the abbot of Glastonbury induced him to surrender his booty, thus effecting a reconciliation between Arthur and Melvas, seems to have been first related in the life of Gildas by Caradoc of Llancarvan, who flourished about the middle of the twelfth century.<sup>1</sup> Peacock has developed the story in various ways. He portrays Melvas as a sort of robber-chieftain, whose spirit is admirably conveyed by the 'War-Song of Dinas Vawr'. But Melvas, brigand though he is, possesses both shrewdness and patriotism, which explains why he comes to terms with Arthur. From the earlier chapters of *The Misfortunes of Elphin* Seithenyn and

<sup>1</sup> Exactly where Peacock found a reference to this story we cannot say, but possibly in Percy Enderbie's *Cambria Triumphans*, originally published in 1661 and reprinted in 1810.

Taliesin are introduced, thus knitting the various parts into a coherent whole. Peacock emphasizes the splendour and power of Arthur's court and, with Hoare's edition of Giraldus Cambrensis as his guide, describes Caer Lleon, with which he interweaves an account of a bardic congress. We are therefore prepared for the close, where Taliesin is made Chief of the Bards and marries Melanghel, while Arthur, grateful for Taliesin's services in securing the restoration of Gwenyvar, insists on the liberation of his master Elphin from the castle of Diganwy.

It was a happy idea on Peacock's part to add variety to his narrative by introducing here and there triads and lyrics, some of the latter ranking among his best productions in verse. The germ of most of the lyrics is to be found in poems of the *Myvyrian Archaiology* which also contained the triads, though for his translations of these quaint apophthegms Peacock made liberal use of the versions given in the *Cambro-Briton*.

*The Misfortunes of Elphin* is one of the few masterpieces in English which sprang from the eighteenth-century Celtic revival. As all his readers are aware, Peacock's strength did not lie in the construction of plots, and though *The Misfortunes of Elphin* is superior to other novels of his, it also is open to criticism on this score. Nominally the novel moves round the figure of Elphin. Yet in the first part he is dominated by the personality of Seithenyn, and after his imprisonment he leaves the stage to Taliesin, Arthur, and Melvas, just appearing at the close to hand over his daughter to Taliesin. He is therefore by no means the most prominent of the characters. Perhaps a more accurate title for the book would have been 'The Adventures of Seithenyn and Taliesin'.

Nevertheless, this novel has a charm all its own, which is due in part at least to the songs. Some of these were entirely Peacock's own work—for example, the lyric in which Taliesin and Melanghel sing their love. But this is not nearly so successful as the 'War-Song of Dinas Vawr', which has often, and rightly, received the highest praise. Here Peacock

was more at home. The swiftness of its movement, its terse energy, and the lurking banter of the author are inimitable. The other lyrics are adaptations of old Welsh songs, but many of these were so freely handled that one may almost speak of Peacock's versions as original work. This certainly holds good of 'The Circling of the Mead Horns', a rousing drinking-song, which showed that Peacock, as in *Headlong Hall*, still excelled in the bacchanalian lyric. 'The Brilliancies of Winter', 'The Song of the Four Winds', and 'The Song of Gwythno Garanhir', though perhaps less outstanding, all achieve what they set out to do. The same can scarcely be said of 'The Consolation of Elphin', which, though closer to the original, lacks the charm of the others. Some of the songs upon which Peacock based his adaptations were obscure to a degree, and it is illuminating to see how from a hint here and a hint there Peacock evolved a lyric, clear of meaning, smooth of rhythm, and with an atmosphere all its own.

If the lyrics are unequal, this inequality is still more marked in the drawing of the characters. Gwenyvar, Angharad, and Melanghel are all shadowy, and even Taliesin is not firmly outlined. By way of contrast, Maelgon stands out more clearly, and this is still truer of Melvas and Seithenyn. Peacock entered thoroughly into the spirit of Melvas and Maelgon, but he revelled in Seithenyn. When confronted with him we inevitably recall Falstaff, and indeed the epithet of 'The Welsh Falstaff' has been more than once conferred upon him. There is much in common between the two. Like Falstaff, Seithenyn is an epitome of bad qualities. He drinks much and often, he is a parasite who clings first to Gwythno Garanhir, next to Ednyfed, then to Melvas, and last to Arthur. His chief concern is good fare, and little he cares how he gets it. Whatever his office, he always turns it to his personal gain. Like Falstaff, too, he wears a lordly air, for he also is of a good family. Is he not Prince Seithenyn ap Seithyn Saidi and Lord Commissioner of Royal Embankment? Moreover, if he is not as witty as Falstaff, he waxes wondrous eloquent. The ease with which he converses with his royal master Elphin in the banqueting scene, though he has imbibed too freely and

too long, is superb. Not even Falstaff could have surpassed the skill with which he extricates himself from the difficult situation that Peacock has so unforgettably depicted.

'I pray your excuses,' said Seithenyn, 'my stomach is weak, and I am subject to dizziness in the head, and my memory is not so good as it was, and my faculties of attention are somewhat impaired, and I would dilate more upon the topic, whereby you should hold me excused, but I am troubled with a feverishness and parching of the mouth, that very much injures my speech, and impedes my saying all I would say, and will say before I have done, in token of my loyalty and fealty to your highness and your highness's house. I must just moisten my lips, and I will then proceed with my observations. Cupbearer, fill.'

'Prince Seithenyn,' said Elphin, 'I have visited you on a subject of deep moment. Reports have been brought to me, that the embankment, which has been so long entrusted to your care, is in a state of dangerous decay.'

'Decay,' said Seithenyn, 'is one thing, and danger is another. Everything that is old must decay. That the embankment is old I am free to confess ; that it is somewhat rotten in parts, I will not altogether deny ; that it is any the worse for that, I do most sturdily gainsay. It does its business well : it works well : it keeps out the water from the land, and it lets in the wine upon the High Commission of Embankment. Cupbearer, fill. Our ancestors were wiser than we : they built it in their wisdom ; and, if we should be so rash as to try to mend it, we should only mar it.'

'The stonework,' said Teithrin, 'is sapped and mined : the piles are rotten, broken, and dislocated : the floodgates and sluices are leaky and creaky.'

'That is the beauty of it,' said Seithenyn. 'Some parts of it are rotten, and some parts of it are sound.'

'It is well,' said Elphin, 'that some parts of it are sound : it were better that all were so.'

'So I have heard some people say before,' said Seithenyn ; 'perverse people, blind to venerable antiquity : that very unamiable sort of people, who are in the habit of indulging their reason. But I say, the parts that are rotten give elasticity to those that are sound : they give them elasticity, elasticity, elasticity. If it were all sound, it would break by its own obstinate stiffness : the soundness is checked by the rottenness,

and the stiffness is balanced by the elasticity. There is nothing so dangerous as innovation. See the waves in the equinoctial storms, dashing and clashing, roaring and pouring, spattering and battering, rattling and battling against it. I would not be so presumptuous as to say, I could build anything that would stand against them half an hour; and here this immortal old work, which God forbid the finger of modern mason should bring into jeopardy, this immortal work has stood for centuries, and will stand for centuries more, if we let it alone. It is well: it works well: let well alone. Cupbearer, fill. It was half rotten when I was born, and that is a conclusive reason why it should be three parts rotten when I die.'

Yet in the end, in spite of all this flowing eloquence and ingenious reasoning, Seithenyn lies prostrate on the floor. In this respect he resembles the Falstaff of *The Merry Wives of Windsor* rather than the self-possessed, invincible Falstaff of *Henry IV*. Nor does Seithenyn impress us by his martial air, which in any case is less to the fore than in his Shakespearean prototype. And would Falstaff have shed maudlin tears over a daughter?

With all this realism there is romance in *The Misfortunes of Elphin*. The author's unrestrained delight in the wild mountain scenery of Wales is obviously post-Augustan. The love of Taliesin and Melanghel could have had no fairer setting. Modern, too, is Peacock's taste for the old literature of Wales, though his appreciation was sobered and subdued by common sense. He would never allow his enthusiasm to run away with his reason. Hence his ban on the supernatural incidents which would have been a veritable feast to such novelists as Mrs. Radcliffe. It will be seen that though Peacock was so much of the nineteenth century as to revel in the glories of mountain solitude, he was also the heir to the traditions of the age of enlightenment. The satirical bent of this lover of Aristophanes may serve as a further illustration of his kinship with the age of Pope. In *The Misfortunes of Elphin* as in *Maid Marian* he uses the past as a stalking-horse under cover of which he aims his barbed shafts at the present. Thus in the speech of Seithenyn defending the ancient embankment against troublesome repairs and improvements he ridicules

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Canning's opposition to Parliamentary reform on the ground of the superlative excellence of the time-honoured British Constitution. Another striking example will be found in his comment on the ruin wrought by Seithenyn.

We, who live in more enlightened times, amidst 'the gigantic strides of intellect', when offices of public trust are so conscientiously and zealously discharged, and so vigilantly checked and superintended, may wonder at the wicked negligence of Seithenyn; at the sophisms with which, in his liquor, he vindicated his system, and pronounced the eulogium of his old dilapidations, and at the blind confidence of Gwythno and his people in this virtual guardian of their lives and property: happy that our own public guardians are too virtuous to act or talk like Seithenyn, and that we ourselves are too wise not to perceive, and too free not to prevent it, if they should be so disposed.

The attack is pushed home with the weapons of mordant irony and flashing antithesis. But these are not used too lavishly, any more than Peacock's playing with words of pedantic strangeness or the dry cynical humour which says that 'Elphin followed Angharad, looking as earnestly to her safety as was compatible with moderate care of his own'. It is just this peculiar blending of past and present, of romance and reason, of satire and humour, which constitutes the charm of *The Misfortunes of Elphin*.

HERBERT WRIGHT.

## PROPOSALS FOR A NEW EDITION OF JOHNSON'S LETTERS<sup>1</sup>

MY purpose in asking you, this afternoon, to listen to an exposition of the problems which confront an editor of Johnson's letters, is primarily utilitarian and frankly selfish. I have learned, in the course of a six years' search for these letters, that very little is to be got by a single declaration of one's aspirations; and that, on the other hand, much may be achieved by persistence, by a resolute determination to introduce one's favourite subject in any company and upon every occasion. In a good cause one may—indeed one must—take the risk of being sometimes tedious. But I have the less scruple in availing myself of this favouring opportunity, because my investigations have, I believe, some interest in themselves, as bearing upon a critical and editorial problem of a very complicated kind. A scholar wishing to devote a lifetime to 'the dull duty of an editor' would be well advised to choose the letters of some famous man. If he wished his task to be as difficult as possible, he could hardly do better than choose Samuel Johnson. The manuscripts of Johnson's letters number, or once numbered, over 1,250; a great many have survived, and have been scattered over two continents. They were rapidly and carelessly written in a hand which is often bad and always deceptive. Some of them have suffered physical mutilation; others, now missing, have been corrupted by transmission through the hands of copyists and printers, or obscured by deliberate suppressions. A good many were undated, or wrongly dated, or have been misplaced by careless editors. The would-be editor has to take account not only of all the manuscripts he can find, but also of a large number of books and periodicals, and of some subsidiary

<sup>1</sup> A paper read to the Association, 10 December 1925.

*testimonia.* He must read erasures when he can, and supply blanks by conjecture when the erasures baffle him. He must be always on the watch for textual corruptions, for almost every letter that he can check is found to contain some error, but he must not hope that he will often be able to offer conjectural emendations with any confidence. All this is in addition to his business as a commentator, which is outside the scope of my paper.

The *Ueberlieferungsgeschichte* begins in Johnson's own lifetime. The letter to Chesterfield was, I believe, never printed until Boswell produced it as the richest gem of his collection. But the letter to Macpherson, and the letter to Lord Thurlow, were printed in the newspapers at the time. These, however, were letters of a very special kind. Most of Johnson's letters were purely private and wholly unstudied; and it was not until after his death that they began to be printed. A good many may be found in the *Gentleman's Magazine* and other periodicals of December 1784 and of 1785 and 1786; and single letters and small groups of letters have continued ever since to come to light in *Notes and Queries* and elsewhere.

The inclusion of letters in editions of Johnson's Works began early. The first edition, as is well known, was that edited by Sir John Hawkins in 1787. The general dissatisfaction with that edition was shown by the production of supplements to it, which though styled Volumes 12, 13, 14, and 15, were not produced by the original and official publishers but by enterprising rivals—Vols. 11-14 by John Stockdale, Vol. 15 by Elliot and Kay. These volumes contained various pieces 'such as it is presumed ought to have made a part of the Edition of Dr. Johnson's Works lately published'. Volumes 14 (1788) and 15 (1789) included a certain number of letters, and when in 1792 a second edition of the Works as a whole was produced—this time with Murphy's Essay by way of Introduction, instead of Hawkins's Life—*Selected Letters* formed a part of the concluding volume.

But the independent publication of a large collection of Johnson's letters had already taken place. In 1788 Mrs. Piozzi,

encouraged by the *succès fou* of her *Anecdotes*, published in two volumes, *Letters to and from the late Samuel Johnson*, in which she printed the great majority of his letters which she had kept (and she seems to have kept nearly all) with a considerable number of her own letters to him, the authenticity of which was suspect at the time and remains at least doubtful. But with that we are not concerned. The originals of Johnson's letters were sent to the printer; but fortunately they were preserved, and a great many of them are available to-day for comparison. We are thus able to test the performance of the first important editor of the letters. We find her guilty of a number of liberties which in the eyes of a modern editor are unjustifiable. She almost invariably reduced the 'studied conclusion' to an *etcetera*. She sometimes cut out sentences or paragraphs, either as trivial or because they discussed details of the sick-room. She sometimes failed to correct a wrong date, or guessed the date and guessed it wrong. What is much more serious, she systematically (more or less!) substituted initials or blanks for personal names. Most of her erasures are light, so that if the original is available the names are easily restored; but some of them are carefully done, either with ink, or by pasting slips of paper over the *delendum*, or by both methods. Even so, though a word be almost undecipherable, the hints afforded by traces of ascenders and descenders sometimes give a useful clue.

Apart from the originals, there are at least four sources from which Mrs. Piozzi's blanks may be restored. Some she restored herself, in a copy which was used by Hayward in compiling her Autobiography; her restorations are sometimes proved by the originals to be wrong. Secondly, Baretti's copy is in the British Museum. When he was not misled by prejudice, his authority is great; but he can frequently be proved wrong. Thirdly, Malone's copy (of the Dublin reprint), which was sold in London a year or two ago, was found to contain numerous notes by him. These evidently rest on conjecture; and when he was not sure, the careful man has added *forsan*. When he does not indicate a doubt, it may be

assumed that he knew. Finally, there is in existence a very interesting copy of the first edition, which bears the autograph of Samuel Lysons the antiquary. There is external evidence—with which I need not trouble you—to show that Lysons was employed by Mrs. Piozzi as a kind of literary agent, and in this book there is internal evidence that he acted also in an editorial capacity. In the first place, he has bound up with it the proof-sheets of a number of letters, which, when they had been set up, Mrs. Piozzi decided to cancel, doubtless on the ground of their unimportance; secondly, he has restored one or two phrases which he could not have restored by guesswork. One example will suffice. Johnson wrote to Mrs. Thrale, 18 May 1776:

B—— went away on Thursday night. . . . He says he has had a very pleasant journey. He paid another visit, I think, to — before he went home.

So it is printed. As expanded by Lysons, it reads thus:

*Boswell* went away on Thursday night. . . . He says, he had a very pleasant journey. He paid another visit, I think, to *Mrs. Rudd*, before he went home to *his own Deary*.

Mrs. Piozzi's worst enemies will admit that this was very good-natured of her. But I must not be irrelevant. The critical importance of this is that we may infer from it that the other, and very numerous, supplements of blanks found in Lysons's copy were made, when necessary, by reference to the originals.

It is thus clear that for the Thrale letters alone we have ample material for a new edition. Birkbeck Hill knew hardly any of the manuscripts; of the *testimonia*, though he knew Hayward and Baretti, he was ignorant of Lysons and Malone. We are able now to add new letters, to correct a great many errors, and to supply with certainty a great many blanks which Hill either filled by conjecture (in which he was very seldom wrong) or gave up as hopeless.

I am not yet clear whether the evidence as a whole will or will not settle the most serious question that has been raised—whether Mrs. Piozzi was guilty not only of careless and

slovenly editing, but of actual *suppressio veri* and *suggestio falsi*. On the whole I am inclined to acquit her. Baretti accuses her soundly of ignorant blundering and of forgery. But some of his charges can be disproved. 'Johnson', he says, 'wrote *pursue*, but many women will write *persue*'. He is wrong; Johnson habitually wrote *persue*. Baretti asserts that Johnson's last letter to Mrs. Thrale was 'a mere forgery of hers'. This Hill knew to be false, for Hayward had seen the letter. It is now in the possession of Sir Charles Russell. But an intelligent man like Baretti, who knew Mrs. Thrale intimately, must have been blinded by passion to suppose that she could have forged one of the most beautiful letters ever written.

When Queen Mary took the resolution of sheltering herself in England, the Archbishop of St. Andrew's, attempting to dissuade her, attended on her journey; and when they came to the irremeable stream that separated the two kingdoms, walked by her side into the water, in the middle of which he seized her bridle, and with earnestness proportioned to her danger and his own affection pressed her to return. The Queen went forward.—If the parallel reaches thus far, may it go no further.—The tears stand in my eyes.

We do not need the evidence of holograph to tell us who wrote this. The preceding letter, which begins, 'If I interpret your letter right, you are ignominiously married', Mrs. Piozzi undoubtedly *did* suppress. But I do not think we need blame her, though Malone's note on the matter begins with the words, 'This worthless woman'. She did not destroy the original, which is now in America.

Birkbeck Hill, though not relying overmuch on Baretti, was profoundly suspicious of Mrs. Piozzi, and believed her *capable de tout*. You will remember that Mrs. Thrale read the Journal of the Highland Tour in MS. in 1775. Johnson writes<sup>1</sup>:

You never told me, and I omitted to enquire, how you were entertained by Boswell's Journal. One would think the man had been hired to be a spy on me. He was very diligent, and caught opportunities of writing from time to time.

<sup>1</sup> Hill 405.

Hill's comment on the second of these sentences is, 'It seems very improbable that Johnson wrote this'. I see no improbability in it. It is Johnson's playful way of saying that Boswell's industry was so great—and so indeed it was—that any one might have supposed him to be writing for money.

Some of the lady's omissions, though not flagitious, are unpardonably careless.<sup>1</sup>

Dr. Taylor lives on milk, and grows every day better, and is not wholly without hope.

Without hope of what? Of life? Of restoration to health? Not at all.

Dr. Taylor lives on milk, and grows every day better, and is not wholly without hope of *Lincoln*.

That is to say, of the Deanery then vacant. Taylor was a confirmed pluralist and schemer for preferment.

But it is time to return to the history of our text. The second large collection of letters was of course Boswell's; and from his time their history is the history of the *Life*, which flowed on like a river, receiving many tributaries of fresh documents and annotations, till at last, in Croker's edition, it burst its banks. There was then a return to the Malone text, the subsidiary accretions flowing henceforward in a separate channel as *Johnsoniana*, and the added letters remaining for the most part scattered, until Birkbeck Hill collected them to form the third main stream of the tradition.

Boswell's theory, which he states again and again, was to comprehend in his *Life* every authentic scrap, however minute, from every source. His practice, however, was not quite equal to his profession. An example is his treatment of the letters to Perkins, who followed Thrale in the management of the Brewery. Hill, who had not seen these letters, but knew that there were twenty of them, very naturally supposed that Boswell had been *allowed* to print only five. But I have seen them, and the letter which Boswell wrote to Perkins thanking him for the loan. From this it is clear that he had *carte blanche*, and that he ignored fifteen letters because they were

<sup>1</sup> Hill 747.

unimportant. In general, however, it is true that—with one notable exception with which I shall deal in a moment—he printed everything he could lay his hands on. We need scarcely doubt that he printed all Johnson's letters to himself, unless discretion occasionally prevailed. He was successful in his applications to Reynolds, Langton, Burney, Thomas Warton, and many more of Johnson's friends. Dr. Taylor was obdurate, and Miss Reynolds had scruples. But Boswell had reason on the whole to be proud of his success.

It is remarkable that he virtually abstains from the letters published by Mrs. Piozzi; and perhaps more remarkable that he says nothing about it. He quotes them, indeed, now and then, but very sparingly, and always for an obvious reason. He nowhere indulges the temptation to select the gems. He may, of course, have been restrained by a lawyer's respect for the rights of literary property; certainly he would ask no favour of his rival. But I think that other motives may have been at work. We know that, as he neared the end of his task, and had to deal with the great mass of letters which Johnson wrote in the last year of his life, Boswell was nervous lest his book become too bulky for the patience of the public. He may have felt, moreover, that the letters to Mrs. Thrale possessed a unity which he ought to respect. For Boswell was before all things an artist. He may, again, have been conscious—perhaps vaguely conscious—that these letters were rather out of the picture—out of *his* picture; that they portrayed an aspect of Johnson which he did not wholly understand, and to which he had done less than justice.

Some interesting questions arise out of Boswell's treatment of the letters which he did use. In the first place, I am confident that he sent the originals, and not copies, to the printer. This was Mrs. Thrale's practice, and Dr. Toynbee tells me that it was general. Boswell certainly sent the Perkins letters to the printer; for in returning them he apologizes for having written on one of them a foot-note of his own. If he had made a copy, it would not have been necessary to deface the original. This point is not without importance; for my experience suggests that a compositor is more likely to

approach accuracy in setting up a difficult manuscript, than a copyist in transcribing it. A copyist writes rapidly, and unconsciously guesses. A compositor, trained to the work, and working more slowly, pays closer attention to the words, and is less apt to jump to conclusions.

Secondly, what has become of these letters? It is a remarkable fact that whereas a very large proportion of the letters added by Croker and others are known to be extant, the great majority of those printed by Boswell seem to have vanished. The only conspicuous exception known to me is the letters to Tom Warton, which are still at Trinity. But they show no trace of Warton's foot-notes, and the inference is clear that Warton copied them (or caused some one else to do so; it is not well done) and wrote his notes on the copy. The Reynolds letters, the Langton letters, the Burney letters, like the letters to Boswell himself, are all to seek. My own theory is that Boswell not only *had* the originals, but kept them, in what he called 'my archives at Auchinleck'. If so, they have perhaps perished as a whole;<sup>1</sup> but if any survive, perhaps all survive.

Though many letters were published for the first time in the century which divides the publication of Boswell and Mrs. Piozzi from the publication of Hill's edition of the letters, nothing was done in this period which can be called editing. The scientific editing of the letters for publication begins and ends with Birkbeck Hill. I say, *for publication*; for a large number of unpublished letters have been printed by Mr R. B. Adam in the Catalogue of his Johnsonian Collection, and Mr. Adam has not only an unrivalled collection of Johnson's letters, but also an unrivalled knowledge of the *anfractuosities* of their *ductus litterarum*; and he has devoted great skill, and enormous pains, to getting his text exactly right.

The resources of public collections, and the generosity of Johnsonians and of dealers (the terms are often synonymous), have enabled me to inspect the originals of some hundreds of the letters. The result has been to make me profoundly sus-

<sup>1</sup> See Malone's note (in the sixth edition of the *Life*, iii. 393) on the letter to Boswell of 3 July 1778, where Malone states that the original of that letter had been 'burned in a mass of papers in Scotland'.

picious of my predecessors and of myself, to impress upon me the inveteracy, the versatility, of human error. I do not suppose it is often realized how much, in editing a text of this kind, is still to do. I could easily weary you with an enumeration of the errors which I and others have detected. And by errors I do not mean the important trifles to which an editor must attend. I do not mean capitals and spelling and commas and paragraphs. I mean actual misreadings of words and phrases, which again and again make nonsense of the text; or what is worse than nonsense, a wrong sense.

The study of these confusions—apart from the satisfaction of clearing them away—is fascinating in itself; and the classification of examples yields results which have some general validity. I ventured, a year or two ago, to point out that if textual criticism in English is ever to become a science, a broad and incontrovertible basis must first be laid by the accumulation and classification of ascertained error; by the comparison of manuscript with print, and by the collection of errata-lists. I note with satisfaction that other people have lately been working on these lines.

But I do not claim to have made a science of Johnsonian palaeography. My induction is as yet too narrow; and the writing is often so careless that misreadings occur which defy analysis. It is, however, possible to show that certain confusions are natural, and that they happen. The long *s* is, of course, confused with *f* (*for* for *see*, *Sir* for *for*, *seem* for *from*, *five* for *six*, *disputed* for *differed*—Johnson did not *dispute* with Lord Monboddo about the savage and the shopkeeper; he was content to *differ*); *se* is confused with *p*, and so *sent* is (not once but many times) misread as *put*. Towards the end of Johnson's life the long *s* was beginning to go out; but Johnson never uses short *s* except at the end of a word. Failure to remember this has caused printers or copyists, in at least three places, to read the word *easily* as if it were *safely*. This is simple as far as *asily* and *afly* are concerned, but why should initial *e* look like a short *s*? This brings me to a frequent source of error. Johnson very often, though not always, uses the old open *e*, so familiar to students of the

earlier hands. It is formed like an *o*, but with the top left open. Moreover, his *o* is often tied at the bottom, not at the top, and so is exactly alike the modern *e*, or the *e* which Johnson himself often writes. Accordingly *these* and *those* are indistinguishable; the context must decide which to choose; *yet* is several times misread as *got*. Again, *r* is often slurred, and little more than what is called a minim. So the equation *from = seem* is made out. *a* is often open, two minimis; and *amusement* may look like *arrangement*. Again, *p* may be read as *se*; but it may also be read as *te*; and from a combination of these things, *paper* becomes *temper*, *p* being

*safly b at wſt*  
easily be at rest

*where              from*  
where              from

*removal  
removal*

read as *te* and *a* (2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> minims) as *m* (3 minims). Again, *gr* is read as *qu*, and so *gratification* becomes *qualification*; and<sup>1</sup> ‘it will give her consequent superiority in the publick opinion and in the courts of Justice’ is a misreading—by no less an authority than J. E. B. Mayor—of ‘it will give her *cause great* superiority in the publick opinion and in the courts of Justice’.

One more example, a surprising one. From what I have said of *r* and of *e*, it follows that *re* and *w* are or may be exactly similar. In one letter Johnson says that his eye is inflamed, so that he can with difficulty — is it *read* or *write*? Mr. Adam says it is *write*, the last letter having been cut off

<sup>1</sup> Hill 156.

by a binder at the end of the line. I with equal dogmatism say it is *read*. The same similarity explains the misreading of *how* as *here*, and of *refuse* as *wish*. It is not possible to equate these two ; but *re* being read as *w* and *f* as *s*, the rest is jumped at.

These investigations might be carried much further, and they would lead to valuable results. An editor would learn always to suspect certain words, and would ask himself whether *seem* should not be *from*, just as the classical scholar asks himself if *θειοε* should not rather be *οειοε*. But on the whole my impression is that in dealing with such a text as mine we must not hope to arrive at anything like the classical canons. The classical scholars, dealing mainly with calligraphic manuscripts (the parents of the extant MSS.) and largely with discontinuous uncials, are able to say not only that such and such confusions are explicable and common, but also that misreadings *not* easily accounted for by the *ductus litterarum* are so improbable as not to be worth consideration. But when the manuscript is cursive, ligatured, and careless, almost anything may happen ; and it is my opinion that a large number of errors do not, strictly speaking, arise from misreading at all. The copyist or printer does not misread all the letters before him ; he reads, or misreads, some of them, and—quite unconsciously—guesses the rest. Let me illustrate this by a few examples. In the famous letter<sup>1</sup> now in the British Museum, in which Johnson advised the King's Librarian about the purchase of rare old books, there are words which are perfectly legible, and which were misread by a kind of carelessness that is not reducible to rules. The print has this :

You must catch up single volumes when you can find them.  
In every place, things often occur when they are least expected.

I had marked this as unsatisfactory. But palaeography cannot mend it. Johnson wrote, and wrote legibly, 'Try every place'. Similarly, and from no cause that can be rationalized, *importance* becomes *influence*, *collected* becomes *connected*, *examine* becomes *inquire*. I suspect that this letter was

<sup>1</sup> Hill 206.

printed from a copy, and that the copyist was sometimes thinking of the sense, and sometimes *not* thinking.

I have been struck by the rarity, in these letters, of a type of error which in my own experience has been quite extraordinarily common; that which classical palaeographers call homœoteleuton: the omission of a number of words because the eye jumps from the last word written to the same word, or a similar word, lower down. I was at one time in the habit of scribbling for a typist; and I found that if I repeated a word, a line or two lower, it was almost as likely as not that my typist would omit all that intervened. But I think I have found only one or two considerable omissions of this kind in Johnson's letters. I infer that the compositor is less prone to errors of this class,<sup>1</sup> and that most of the letters were originally set up from the autographs.

Perhaps you will bear with me to the extent of a few examples in greater detail, to show to what degree the sense has sometimes been perverted or spoiled. Some of the passages affected I had already suspected. Others I think no critic would have been entitled to suspect. Textual criticism is a depressing business; and one of its most depressing thoughts is this, that there must be, in all human probability, in any text not overseen by its author, gross errors which we not only cannot mend, but cannot even know to be there.

In what follows I give first the printed text, then the true text.

Writing to Richardson about *Clarissa*,<sup>2</sup> Johnson complains of suppressions:

I never indeed found a hint of any such defalcation, but I regretted it; for though the story is long, every letter is short.

Read . . . but *I fretted*.

<sup>1</sup> I am warned by an expert that this is fallacious. The compositor commits *homœoteleuton* as often as any one else; but the proof does not leave the room till the chasms have been filled at the direction of the reader. It comes to much the same thing, however, for my purpose, if it may be assumed that print normally is, and a MS. copy normally is not, checked word for word with the original.

<sup>2</sup> Bill 31.

Writing about the Dictionary,<sup>1</sup> Johnson mentions his amanuenses :

Go to Mr. Millar . . . and inform him that I know not how to manage. I pay 3 and 20 shillings a week to my assistants, *in each instance* having much assistance from them, but they tell me they shall be able to *pull* better in method, as indeed I intend they shall. The point is to get two guineas.

*Sir,*

Your humble servant  
Sam: Johnson.

This as it stands is almost contradictory. Fortunately the manuscript survives. Read *in truth without, fall, for*. The point was not merely to get the guineas, but to direct them to the proper quarter.

In the letter to Strahan about *Rasselas*<sup>2</sup> there is an error which escaped Birkbeck Hill, and which until the other day escaped me, though I have more than once transcribed the letter from a facsimile.

When I was with you last night I told you of a story which I was preparing for the press. The title will be *The Choice of Life*.

But the first letter of the word printed as *story* could not possibly be a long *s*. The word is, beyond any doubt, not *story*, but *thing*. Writers are fond of calling their works *things*. You remember the first sentence of the Advertisement to *The Vicar of Wakefield*: 'There are an hundred faults in this Thing, and an hundred things might be said to prove them beauties.'

Confusion of initial *t* with *s* makes nonsense of another passage.<sup>3</sup> Answering some conundrum of Mrs. Thrale's, Johnson is made to write this :

Queeney seems now to have forgotten me. Of the different appearance of the hills and vallies an account may perhaps be given, without the supposition of any prodigy. If she had been out, and the evening was breezy, the exhalations would rise from the low grounds very copiously ; and the wind that swept and

<sup>1</sup> Hill 38.

<sup>2</sup> Hill 124.

<sup>3</sup> Hill 859.

cleared the hills would only by its cold condense the vapours of the sheltered vallies.

This, one was forced to suppose, must be brachylogical. Queeney's presence could not affect the mists; the meaning must be that she was the observer and had reported the phenomena from close quarters. But such an explanation would be chimerical, for Queeney is here a chimaera. Johnson meant to write, not *if she had been out but if the day had been hot*. But he left out *day*—he is apt to drop little words—and the printer reading *the* as *she*, corrected *hot* to *out* to make, as he supposed, sense. The ultimate result has been to drag in Queeney and her forgetfulness, which really belong to the preceding paragraph.

An amusing crop of blunders arises in another letter, which deals not with Queeney but with her sister Sophy.<sup>1</sup>

She will go back to her arithmetick again; a science which will always delight her more, as by advancing further she *discerns* more of its use, and a science *devoted* to Sophy's *ease* of mind; for you *told* in the last winter that she loved metaphysics more than romances.

That science should be devoted to Sophy's ease of mind may have gratified her mother. But it was very far from Johnson's meaning. He wrote *discovers, suited, case, held, the Muses*.

In spite of my agnostic leanings, I am a friend to textual criticism, and believe that, by the prolonged and vigilant indulgence of the suspicious element of our nature, something—not very much—may be achieved. My task has lain rather in discovery of originals and collation of them, than in guessing; but I have marked some places where guessing may be justified, and every now and then I hazard a guess. I believe I may have mended half a dozen places. My happiest emendation, I grieve to say, proved to be one of supererogation. I was reading, in the train, a Magazine of 1787, in which is printed a letter from Johnson to James Elphinstone.<sup>2</sup> I was struck by an oddity in the conclusion:

<sup>1</sup> Hill 912.

<sup>2</sup> Hill's *Boswell*, i. 210.

I beg of you to write soon and to write often, and to write long letters, which I hope in time to repay you; but you must be a patient creditor. I have however this of gratitude, that I think of you with regard, when I do not, perhaps, give the proofs which I ought of Piety.

Sir,

Your most obliged and  
most humble servant,  
Sam: Johnson.

Why, I asked, should Johnson think that he ought to give, to a comparative stranger, 'proofs of piety'? The truth then dawned on me. Read 'proofs which I ought of *being*, Sir, etc.' But when I came home and looked up Boswell, I found that I had been anticipated.

Let me, in conclusion, fill up the cup of your patience by an appeal for help. Naturally modest, I have been convinced that for an efficient editor it is the law of his being *digito monstrari*—there goes the man who is trying to edit Johnson's letters. I appeal, then, for notoriety. It is by casual and conversational contacts that many of my best catches have been made. It was in this way that I found the letters to Perkins. They were bought by X, thirty-five years ago. X sold them to Y, and his successor gave me Y's name and address. Y was long since dead; but I told A, who inquired of B, who mentioned it to C, and C produced the name and address of Z (successor to Y), who sent me the volume by the next post. In an even more casual way I found, within twenty miles of Oxford, a bound volume of letters to Dr. Taylor—full of corrections of the text, and including an autograph copy of the letter to James Macpherson, the existence of which was unrecorded.

These were Red Letter Days. Far more often, a better clue leads to disappointment. There are a great many single letters in private hands, in England and America, which I ought to see, and the owners of which, I am sure, would not grudge the trouble of satisfying me. But the dweller in a country house, or the merchant prince of Akron, Ohio, is often a shy bird. When caught at last, he is apt to

reply, 'Of course I shall be delighted to send it you, but I did not think you would be interested, as it was printed in the sale catalogue'. I know those prints in sale catalogues. Either they are copies (with fresh mistakes) from Mrs. Piozzi's edition, or Birkbeck Hill's, or they are the efforts of amateur palaeo-graphers. My ambition is to see for myself all extant letters, no matter how often they have been printed. And for help in struggling towards that ideal I appeal to members of your Association, in the hope that you will be so good as to put it about.

R. W. CHAPMAN.

## THE FAERIE QUEENE AND ITS CRITICS

### I

**A**MONG the poems that the world has decided to accept as masterpieces the *Fuerie Queene* takes an important place. It may almost be said to have reached the level of the top shelf, for while most people have heard of Una and the Red Cross Knight, of Britomart and Artegal, and perhaps of Calidore and Pastorella, they seem content as a rule to leave the poem itself in the dignified seclusion to which they have relegated many of the greatest things in literature. They are, perhaps, afraid to risk a closer inspection lest it might interfere with the ideal they have formed.

Be Yarrow stream unseen, unknown !  
It must, or we shall rue it :  
We have a vision of our own ;  
Ah ! why should we undo it ?

But the more serious students of literature are not less firmly convinced that in this work we have one of the crowning glories of English poetry. ‘It is by the *Faerie Queene*’, says Mr. Edmund Gosse, ‘that Spenser holds his sovereign place among the foremost English poets. . . . It is a miracle of sustained and extended beauty.’<sup>1</sup> Mr. George Saintsbury pronounces a similar verdict: ‘Spenser is one of those few who can challenge the title of “greatest English poet” . . . . It seems to me that, putting Shakespeare aside as *hors concours*, not merely in degree but in kind, only two English poets can challenge Spenser for the primacy. These are Milton and Shelley.’<sup>2</sup> And he goes on to argue that on the whole Spenser

<sup>1</sup> *Modern English Literature*, p. 84.

<sup>2</sup> *Elizabethan Literature*, p. 93.

stands above them both. The *Faerie Queene* he describes as 'the only long poem that a lover of poetry can sincerely wish longer'.<sup>1</sup> And Dean Church speaks in no less emphatic terms: 'Spenser has permanently lifted the level of English poetry by a great and sustained effort of rich and varied art, in which one main purpose rules—loyalty to what is noble and pure'.<sup>2</sup>

These passages may be taken as fairly representative of the way in which the recognized authorities regard the poet and his chief work. Spenser is among the very greatest of English poets: the *Faerie Queene* is his finest achievement. So far there is a general agreement. But if we carry our investigation a little further, and inquire what the critics have to say about the *Faerie Queene* when they discuss it in detail, we discover a very general tendency to find grave fault with it.

'In the first two books', says Dean Church, 'the allegorical story proceeds from point to point with fair coherence and consecutiveness. After them the attempt to hold the scheme together, except in the loosest and most general way, is given up as too troublesome or too confined. The poet prefixes indeed the name of a particular virtue to each book, but, with slender reference to it, he surrenders himself freely to his abundant flow of ideas, and to whatever fancy or invention tempts him, and ranges unrestrained over the whole field of knowledge and imagination'.<sup>3</sup> He calls the poem 'a receptacle, without much care to avoid repetition, or to prune, correct, and condense, for all the abundance of his ideas, as they welled forth in his mind day by day'.<sup>4</sup> And a more recent critic, Professor Jack, of Aberdeen, writing of the second half of the poem, uses language no less severe: 'The scheme has now become so large, it is no scheme. Each book deals with any set of adventures that at the moment pleases, and if one is to speak of their coherence with themselves, the fourth and sixth books have not even this coherency to recommend them'.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Elizabethan Literature*, p. 88.

<sup>2</sup> *Spenser* (English Men of Letters), p. 165.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 125.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 129.

<sup>5</sup> *Chaucer and Spenser*, p. 214.

Now when we put these criticisms side by side with the eulogies previously quoted, we can hardly fail to be struck by a want of harmony. Can both verdicts be true? Should Spenser be placed in the very front of English poets while yet his chief work, the one by which his fame stands or falls, is for the most part a failure? If the two judgements can be reconciled, well and good. If not, it is well that we should try to find out where the truth lies.

Before going further into the main question let us close two side-tracks down which an escape may be attempted.

First we may note that the criticisms with which we are concerned are not the pointing out of the flaws and imperfections which we must always be prepared to find in any work of art carried out on a large scale. They go much deeper than that. They condemn the structure as a whole. It is not that a window in the north transept is filled with inferior stained glass, or that the monuments erected over some of the tombs are too florid, and the inscriptions in bad taste; it is rather that the greater part of the building is clumsy and inharmonious in design, that, so far from being a cathedral whose noble proportions impress and delight us, it is a building which may indeed have been begun with some artistic idea, but which has been carried out with little reference to the original plan, and indeed with no recognizable plan at all—a mere jumble of stones and mortar.

And secondly, the damaging effect of these criticisms is not lessened by the praise that is given to other aspects of the poem. To lay stress upon ‘the beauty and melody of his numbers, the abundance and grace of his poetic ornaments, the recurring and haunting rhythm of numberless passages in which thought and imagery and language and melody are interwoven in one perfect and satisfying harmony’,<sup>1</sup> is all very well. But these merits are not enough to constitute a great poem. The beauty of the wood-carving in the choir stalls, the sweetness and rich variety of tone in the organ, the quaint and curious design of the font, may call for our admiration; but they will not entitle a clumsy and ill-planned

<sup>1</sup> Church, *op. cit.*, p. 139.

building, without balance or proportion or unity of design, to be regarded as a great and beautiful cathedral.

The problem then remains. If the *Faerie Queene* is as faulty in structure, as loose and inconsequent in plan, as the critics declare, then it is not a great poem, except in length, and Spenser must be relegated to a much lower place on the slopes of Parnassus than that which by common consent he has hitherto occupied.

But while the problem, when once it is clearly recognized, can be stated in a few sentences, the solution, if one should be found, cannot be similarly compressed. And so far as the present occasion is concerned one is faced with the difficulty, not to say impossibility, of giving anything like an adequate exposition of a view of the poem that differs widely from that which is commonly accepted. All that can be attempted here is :

1. To glance briefly at three misconceptions which seem to underlie many of the accusations that are brought against the poem, and which, by diverting criticism away from the main track of the poet's line of thought, have led down into a waste and waterless wilderness ;
2. To make a brief examination of one of the later books with a view to ascertaining whether any kind of scheme or plan can be recognized in it; and
3. To follow one of the stories running through a considerable part of the poem in order to see what light it may throw on Spenser's way of handling his materials.

## II

(a) The first misconception is based upon a statement made by Spenser himself. It will be remembered that the first three books of the poem were published in 1590. But the whole work was intended to consist of twelve books, and as even the most sympathetic reader could scarcely be expected from this instalment to understand the plan of the poem as a whole, there was appended to it, in the form of a letter to Sir Walter Raleigh, an explanatory statement of the scheme

and intention of the work. In this letter Spenser explained that the twelve books would deal severally with twelve private moral virtues, of which the first three were Holiness, Temperance, and Chastity (the next three were subsequently found to be Friendship, Justice, and Courtesy), and that twelve knights would be the 'patrons' of these twelve virtues. So far good. The knights duly appear, and stand as typical representatives of the qualities named. But the critics complain that while, in the first, second, and fifth books, the story centres in the knight, and follows his adventures closely, in the other three books the respective knights play a much less prominent part—which is true—but they go on to say that these three books are in consequence without form and void of any unifying purpose. They are 'a wilderness in which we are left to wander. We can hardly lose our way in it,' says Dean Church, 'for there is no way to lose.'<sup>1</sup> But this insistence on what we may call the 'single knight theory' appears to involve a fourfold misconception:

(i) It goes far beyond anything that Spenser promised, and indeed ignores his plain warning that the third book would not be built up on that plan, though Britomart, the Lady Knight, would play an important part in it.

(ii) The plan would, if it had been carried out through the twelve books, have involved a monotonous uniformity of treatment which would have been a mark for equally severe criticism.

(iii) It ignores some fundamental differences between the themes of the various books. The subject of Temperance, for example, or, as we should phrase it now, Self-restraint, is effectively presented in the story of Sir Guyon, who passes through a series of temptations to give way to anger, to covetousness, and to sensual indulgence, and we watch with sympathy his efforts to attain to mastery over self, knowing that we ourselves have to struggle towards the same goal through various experiences, which, though differing widely in outward form, are in their essence the same as those through which he passes. But when we turn to the subject of Friend-

<sup>1</sup> *op. cit.*, p. 129.

ship we find ourselves in the presence of a complexity of relationships, too various to enter into the life of any one person. It is not difficult to recognize that friendships between men, friendships between women, and friendships between men and women, have their own special qualities which cannot all be represented in the life of any individual. Further, the influence of friendship in public life is one thing, and in private life it is another; it may last for a lifetime, or it may be the episode of an hour; and Spenser may well have felt that a subject of such complexity calls for a different method of treatment from that which would be suitable for a simpler aspect of life.

(iv) The possibility that in the third, fourth, and sixth books, in which the single knight plan is not followed, there is some different, but no less artistic scheme, does not seem to have been sufficiently considered.

Without carrying the matter farther for the moment we may conclude that the condemnation of three of the books on the ground that they do not conform to the single knight scheme is open to question, and the verdict of guilty that the advocates on the prosecuting side call for with such confidence cannot yet be given.

(b) The second misconception that needs to be cleared away belongs to what may be called the charge of loose ends. It is said that many stories are begun and dropped again without being completed. In the words of Dean Church: 'Adventures begin which have no finish. Actors in them drop from the clouds, claim an interest, and we ask in vain what has become of them.'<sup>1</sup>

This criticism is evidently intended to apply, not to the first and second books, which have an obvious completeness of their own, but to the rest of the poem. It is a curious mixture of truth and error. It is true that several persons are introduced in the third book about whose fate we are left uncertain when the book comes to an end. This is what happens with the two Florimels, with Amoret, and with Britomart herself, as

<sup>1</sup> *op. cit.*, p. 130.

well as with Blandamour and Paridel, and the boaster Braggadocio, who first appeared in the second book. But we find them again in the fourth book, and in the fifth their various stories are brought to a satisfactory conclusion: the true Florimel is wedded to Marinel; the false Florimel is duly disposed of; Amoret is restored to Scudamore, and although the final union of Britomart and Artegal has still to be celebrated (being no doubt reserved for Book XII, just as that of Una and the Red Cross Knight had been postponed) yet their story is brought to a definite stage which is so far complete. The men too are suitably dealt with. The fact that appears to have been overlooked is that the third, fourth, and fifth books were evidently designed to form a group which is to a large extent self-contained. Book III has for its theme Chastity, and in it the influence of woman is dominant; Book V, dealing with Justice, is the man's book; while Book IV represents the common ground of friendship, and we shall see a little later how Spenser has linked up the third and fifth books in the middle of the fourth.

So far then the charge of loose ends does not hold good. But when we come to the sixth book it is fully exemplified. New characters are introduced, their story is brought to some interesting stage, and then dropped, with a promise of resumption which is not fulfilled. Thus at the end of the fourth canto, after Calepine has handed over to Matilde and her husband the baby that he had rescued from the bear, we are told—

That it became a famous knight well knowne  
And did right noble deeds, the which elsewhere are shown.

But so far as this book is concerned we look in vain for any further mention of it. And several other stories are left half told. It is, however, reasonable to assume that the plan followed in the third, fourth, and fifth books would have been carried out in another group beginning with book six, and that these stories also would in due time have been brought to completion. The incompleteness of these stories may well add to our regret that we have been deprived of nearly half

of the poem, but it cannot rightly be used, as the critics have used it, to show that Spenser has handled his work in an inartistic or incompetent manner.

(c) The third misconception that has vitiated the criticism of the *Faerie Queene* can be touched upon only in the briefest manner, though it deserves much fuller treatment. It has to do with the interpretation of what is often called the historical allegory underlying the poem, but which would be better described as allusion to contemporary persons and events. It is difficult to account for some of the statements that have been made in regard to this matter by responsible critics. Professor Courthope, for instance, in his *History of English Poetry*, writes as follows: 'The subject of the fifth book is Justice; but this, so far from being the "private virtue" promised by the poet, is almost entirely political; relating either to the government of Lord Grey in Ireland, the attacks of Philip II on the Low Countries, or the religious back-slidings of Henry IV of France.'<sup>1</sup> But so far from this being the case we find, when we turn to the poem itself, that these historical matters occupy just one quarter of the book—three cantos out of twelve—and that many different aspects of Justice in private life are dealt with in the other nine cantos. Dean Church is a little farther from the truth. He says: 'The adventures of Artegal mainly preserve the memory of Lord Grey's terrible exploits against wrong and rebellion in Ireland.'<sup>2</sup> A reference to the text of the poem shows that the part of the adventures of Artegal which represents Lord Grey's exploits in Ireland occupies one canto out of twelve.

This is not a promising start if we are looking for guidance as to the way in which Spenser has managed the historical side of his allegory. And there are other misconceptions that have helped no less to set the reader on the wrong track for understanding the poem. It is obvious, for example, that, in the ninth and tenth cantos of Book V, the fate of Duessa is meant to call to mind the trial and execution of Mary Queen of Scots. This was recognized in Spenser's own day, and we

<sup>1</sup> Vol. ii, p. 268.

<sup>2</sup> Spenser, p. 161.

are told that her son, who was then James VI of Scotland, so keenly resented the reference to his mother that he appealed to Elizabeth to punish the presumption of the poet. From this it was assumed that wherever Duessa appears in the poem she stands for Mary Queen of Scots, and a passage that did not square with this interpretation was put on the rack and stretched so that it might fit. Thus the references to Duessa in the First Book have been, though not without some difficulty, applied to various incidents in Mary Stuart's life, and it is only somewhat recently that Miss Winstanley has shown, with an almost mathematical completeness of demonstration, that the reference is really to Mary Tudor and not to the other Mary. Similarly in Book V, Artegal, so far as the incidents recorded in the twelfth canto are concerned, represents Lord Grey, but in the eleventh canto, where the allusion is to events in the career of Henry IV of France, Artegal cannot stand for Lord Grey, since he took no part in these affairs. He may perhaps represent the Earl of Essex. And other similar examples might be adduced.

Some of these changes of reference are too obvious to be overlooked. But instead of being regarded as clues that might lead to an understanding of Spenser's purpose in referring to contemporary events, they have usually been regarded as blemishes calling for such apology as could be offered. Church suggests that they are intended 'to throw curious readers off the scent.... There is', he says, 'an intentional dislocation of the parts of the story, when they might make it imprudently close in its reflection of facts or resemblance in portraiture. A feature is shown, a manifest allusion is made, and then the poet starts off in other directions, to confuse and perplex all attempts at interpretation, which might be too particular and too certain.'<sup>1</sup> But it is an unlikely explanation. We shall probably get much nearer to the truth if we recognize that throughout the poem the moral allegory is the main concern of the poet, and that the allusions to contemporary events and persons are brought in merely by way of illustration. Artegal represents Justice or, perhaps we should say, the man who is

<sup>1</sup> *op. cit.*, p. 131.

striving to carry out the ideal of Justice in public and private life; and when Spenser makes use of some incidents in the career of Lord Grey, when he was trying to put into effect in Ireland the principles of Justice, then for the moment Artegal represents Lord Grey. But in other parts of the story, when other incidents are being used to illustrate the working of Justice, Artegal may be intended to remind us of some other person of note, or more frequently there will be no such allusion at all<sup>1</sup>. There are no standing personal equations in the Faerie Queene, and many of the attempted identifications need to be reduced to lower terms before they can be regarded as approximating to the intention of the poet.

If the views so far put forward come anywhere near the truth, it would appear that the critics have not succeeded in throwing much light on the difficulties of this great poem. They have, it would seem, given too little heed to the help that Spenser himself has offered to his readers, and, having failed to recognize a coherent idea and purpose in the poem, they have too readily assumed that no such idea and purpose exist.

### III

The clearing away of the misconceptions that have encumbered the path is a necessary preliminary if we are to arrive at a right understanding of the *Faerie Queene*; but it is evident that work of a more constructive character will be required, and we may now attempt to get a little further light on two of the main problems with which we are faced in studying the poem.

And first we may consider briefly the question of form.<sup>I</sup> If it is true, as the critics allege, that in the greater part of the poem no attention has been paid to form, or, at least, that no trace of any effort to carry out an artistic design is discoverable, then the poem is condemned as a work of art.

There are, however, indications which appear to point to a different conclusion, of which three may be noted.

<sup>1</sup> This point has been well put by Professor E. A. Greenlaw, in *Modern Language Notes*, March 1920.

(i) In the first place we find that at the beginning of each book care has been taken to provide some link with the previous one. Thus the fourth book opens with a delightful little incident which, while belonging strictly to the subject of the book, for it supplies a double illustration of the power of friendliness, serves at the same time as a link with what goes before ; for it is Britomart, the heroine of the third book, who plays the leading part in it. And so it is in each of the books after the first.

(ii) Then again, in each book, soon after the opening, some incident is introduced in which there is a striking illustration of the qualities opposed to the virtue with which the book deals. Thus in the course of the first canto of Book V we meet with a flagrant example of Injustice ; in Book VI of Courtesy ; and so with all the rest.

(iii) Further, in every book except the third, Arthur comes to the help of the knight who represents the virtue that is the subject of the book, at the time of his greatest difficulty, when no effort of his own can deliver him from the danger by which he is threatened ; and although Arthur may appear in other places it is always in the eighth canto that his main intervention occurs. The adoption of a different plan in the third book is evidently intentional, but it is one of the many interesting points that must be left on one side at present.

While these indications do not carry us very far, they do serve to suggest that some kind of plan, some orderly scheme for the poem as a whole, had taken shape in the mind of the poet, and that, to this extent at least, he had carried it out. But we will come to closer quarters with the matter, and will make a brief examination of one of the books in order to see whether it is such a pathless wilderness as it is said to be. And we will take for this purpose the fourth book, the book of Friendship, which has been censured on this ground perhaps more severely than any other. Professor Jack describes it as 'a mere run of romantic adventure'.<sup>1</sup> Miss Kate Warren says : 'There is no artistic unity of any kind to be found in this book. . . It is a riot of formlessness.'<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Chaucer and Spenser, p. 214.

<sup>2</sup> Introduction to Book IV, p. ix.

The book opens, as we have already seen, with a short introductory passage which serves as a link with the previous part of the story, and at the same time strikes the keynote of the part now opening. This is balanced by a passage at the end of the book, which forms a supplement to the aspects of Friendship with which the book has been concerned. It suggests that a kind of impersonal parallel may be found in the co-operation that is sometimes to be seen in the forces of Nature. The closing passage also serves as an anticipatory link with Book V. Soon after the opening we meet with the figure of Até (Strife), drawn with a wonderful combination of realistic and symbolic power, standing there at the outset as a warning sign of the hostile forces against which Friendship has to contend, while near the end of the book we find the beautiful picture of Concord; and on comparing the two passages it is evident that they are meant to be set over against one another. Thus Até is spoken of as 'mother of debate and all dissension' (canto I, v. 19), while Concord is the 'Mother of blessed Peace and Friendship trew' (c. X, v. 34). Até's dwelling is 'Hard by the gates of hell' (c. I, v. 20), while the domain of Concord is 'a second paradise' (c. X, v. 28), and one who surveyed it 'thought there was none other heaven than this' (c. X, v. 28). Within the dwelling of Até we find, hanging on the walls, rent robes and broken sceptres, shivered spears and shields torn in twain; there are 'Altars defyled, and holy things defast' (c. I, v. 21); while in the temple of Concord the roof is decked with crowns and chains and garlands gay, and a thousand precious gifts, while from the altars there rises the sweet odour of frankincense (c. X, v. 37). Of Até it is said that she tried to bring all this world's fair workmanship to utter confusion:

And that great golden chain quite to divide,  
With which it blessed Concord hath together tide.  
(c. I, v. 30.)

And over against this, in one of the most beautiful passages in the whole poem, we have a description of the work of Concord:

By her the heaven is in his course contained,  
And all the world in state unmoved stands,  
As their Almightie maker first ordained,  
And bound them with inviolable bands. (c. x, v. 35.)

Other details might be cited, but enough has been given to make it clear that in these two passages, standing one near the opening and the other not far from the close of the book, there is a skilfully planned contrast between two powerful forces in the moral world, which work, the one in opposition to, the other in support of, the great virtue of Friendship.

A careful survey of the rest of the book reveals the fact that, following upon the account of Até and her mischievous influence, there come three sections of unequal length, leading up to, but not including, the sixth canto; and that, beginning from the seventh canto, and continuing till we reach the account of Concord, there come three other sections which are set, in reverse order, over against the previous three. If we denote the three earlier sections by the letters P, Q, R, the corresponding sections that follow will be R<sup>1</sup>, Q<sup>1</sup>, P<sup>1</sup>, and the contrasted groups are separated by the sixth canto. The incidents or aspects of the poem that make up the various sections come naturally enough in the development of the story, and the plan is not obtruded on our notice; but the indications of intended contrast, both in incident and in phrasing, are clear enough to leave little room for doubt as to its being the plan that was in Spenser's mind when he wrote the poem.

The incident that makes up what I have called the P section tells of the 'fayned friendship' (c. II, v. 18) of Blandamour and Paridel, which is broken into by the unrestrained sensuality which is one of their main characteristics, and Até is represented as helping to stir up trouble between them (c. II, vv. 11, 12); and over against this is put the P<sup>1</sup> section, in the eighth and ninth cantos, which contain the story of the 'true friendship' (c. IX, v. 3) of the two squires, Amyas and Placidus, which is shown in action when Placidus risks his life to deliver Amyas from the clutches of Corflambo, the monster of lustful passion. To make the parallelism of contrast complete

we have Arthur intervening with his powerful assistance at the moment when Placidas would have been overcome but for his help, and exercising an ennobling and harmonizing influence, the very opposite of that in which Até delighted (c. ix, vv. 14–16). And the way in which Spenser dwells upon the superficial and unstable quality of the friendship based upon and devoted to vicious ends (c. ii, v. 29), and on the other hand upon the deep and lasting character of the friendship that is founded upon virtue (c. ix, vv. 1–3), shows, almost to demonstration, that the contrast is part of a pattern on which the book is designed.

The incident that occupies the most prominent place in the first part of the book is that of Cambel and Triamond. It fills a large part of the second, third, and fourth cantos, and is balanced in the second half by a section in which the achievements of Arthur are related. These are the sections that I have marked as Q and Q<sup>1</sup> respectively. Again we find certain details in these narratives which appear to be intentionally set over against one another. In the earlier story we have a woman, Cambina, exerting her influence to bring about reconciliation and friendship between men who are contending with one another: she uses a magic wand (c. iii, vv. 42, 46, 48), and gives to the combatants the wonderful drink Nepenthe (c. iii, vv. 43, 49) ‘whereby all cares forepast are washt away quite from their memorie’ (c. iii, v. 44). In the later story it is a man, Arthur, who brings his healing and uplifting power to the aid of women in distress. He uses a sword instead of a wand, and he too has a precious liquor (c. viii, v. 20) with which the wounds of Amoret are healed. It is scarcely likely that this combination of parallelism with diversity can be merely accidental. It is probable that a larger and more important contrast underlies the stories, the former group being intended to convey the idea of conflict and reconciliation in public life between groups of men or parties in a nation, while the later incidents are all concerned with the sufferings, the dangers, and the mistakes of individuals, and the way in which some greater power may come to heal, to rescue, and to uplift those who are in need of help.

One cannot, however, lay stress upon this, inasmuch as it depends on the interpretation to be given to the legend of Cambel and Triamond, and to discuss this would take us too far away from our present purpose.

Immediately before and after the sixth canto we have the two incidents that I have marked R and R<sup>1</sup>. In the one a golden girdle is the cause of strife: in the other a ruby heart is the means of reconciliation. The central figure of the one is the false Florimel, who has already been the complaisant 'friend' of a number of men in succession, and who now stands by and listens with no sign of resentment while the discussion proceeds as to which of these valiant knights is to have her next. On the other side is the austere chaste figure of Belphoebe, who has, in a distant and queenly fashion, accepted the devotion of Timias, the squire of Arthur. When he falls into an error, which does not appear to be a very grave one, he is summarily dismissed, and it is only after a long period of abject penitence that he is forgiven, and allowed again to serve her (c. VIII).

The sixth canto, which occupies, as we have seen, a central place in this group of contrasted incidents, is a masterly piece of work, to be matched only in the finest parts of the poem. Britomart is passing on her way after the turmoil of the tournament in which she has played an effective part. Artegal, sore and angry at his recent overthrow, is led by a misunderstanding to attack her, not guessing for a moment that this brave champion is a woman. He is quickly thrown from his saddle, but springs up and continues the contest fiercely on foot, until at length a 'wicked stroke' shears away the front part of Britomart's helmet, and reveals to his astonished gaze the face of a most lovely woman, crowned with a glory of golden hair. Then there is no more conflict.

The whole canto is a masterpiece of allegorical narrative. Britomart, the Lady Knight of Chastity, stands for womanhood on its defence against all manner of enemies. Artegal is later to figure as the representative of Justice, but here he is disguised as the salvage knight. 'His armour was like salvage weed, with woody mosse bidight', and on his shield

was the motto '*Salvagesse sans finesse*' (c. IV, v. 39). He stands here for manhood in its more primitive and savage state, strong and vigorous, with no evil purpose, but fiercely resentful of opposition. Such a spirit is bound, sooner or later, to come into conflict with the womanhood that declines to submit to the authority of the mere male. The contest may be long and severe, but it ends when the man sees the vision, which may come to him quite suddenly and unexpectedly, of the real beauty of womanhood, which he has never known before. The woman on her side finds to her astonishment that beneath the rough and unpromising exterior lies the ideal which she has so long cherished in her heart (cf. Book III, c. II), their conflict ceases, and in its place there comes a growing friendship (the word is used in v. 17).

One can hardly suppose that it is by accident that Spenser has placed here, in the middle of the book, this beautiful piece of allegory, which reaches down to the very heart of the whole matter. Before it comes the one group of incidents, and after it the other, that have already been noted as being set in contrast with one another. And the skill with which the design has been laid out is shown further in the fact that it is the representative knights of the third and fifth books that are thus brought into friendly relations with one another in the middle of the fourth book; so that the great moral forces of Chastity, Friendship, and Justice are thus closely interwoven with one another.<sup>1</sup>

#### IV

As a last point, let us consider briefly the charge, so often brought against Spenser, of losing grip of his subject. From the beginning of the third book 'the thread at once of story and allegory, slender henceforth at the best, is neglected, and often entirely lost'. So writes Dean Church. And he goes on to say: 'Even the special note of each particular virtue becomes more faint and indistinct. The one law to which the

<sup>1</sup> A concise view of the plan on which the book appears to be constructed will be found at the end of this paper.

poet feels bound is to have twelve cantos in each book ; and to do this he is sometimes driven to what in later times has been called padding.... He had exhausted his proper allegory, or he got tired of it. His poem became an elastic framework, into which he could fit whatever interested him and tempted him to composition.<sup>1</sup> And Professor Jack says : 'The Book of Friendship depends on its air of loose romance ; so much so as to be scarcely a Book of Friendship at all.'<sup>2</sup>

It is as serious an accusation as that of the neglect of form, and if it could be substantiated it would effectually destroy the claim of the poem to be regarded as a great work of art. My own study of the poem has led me to a different conclusion. I can understand that a critic, anxious to find fault with the *Faerie Queene*, might complain that Spenser has insisted with monotonous repetition on the one aspect of morality chosen for the theme of each book in turn. The complaint would not be fair, because of the rich variety that Spenser has introduced into his treatment ; but it would be intelligible. The complaint, repeated as we have seen by one critic after another, that, from the third book onwards, Spenser has often forgotten his theme, or has carelessly introduced matters irrelevant to it, is so wide of the mark as to suggest that a disproportionate amount of attention has been devoted to the first two books.

To decide upon the justice or injustice of the accusation it would be necessary to undertake a thorough examination of the books in question ; and this would obviously carry us beyond the limits of the present occasion. But in a less ambitious way we may get a glimpse of the direction in which the evidence tends. We will take for this purpose the story of Florimel, and her counterpart the False Florimel, who play a somewhat elusive, but not unimportant, part in the third, fourth, and fifth books of the poem. It would be hardly fair to expect the reader to recall on demand the incidents in which these characters take part, so I will sketch them in barest outline.

<sup>1</sup> *Spenser* (English Men of Letters), pp. 126-7.

<sup>2</sup> *Chaucer and Spenser*, p. 280.

Of Florimel's origin nothing is told us, but we learn that in her early years she was fostered by the Graces on the Acidalian mount where Venus lived (Book IV, c v, v. 5), and that it was from this place that she brought away the magic belt, or golden girdle, which had been made by Vulcan for Venus in the days of their first affection, and which was a test of chastity.

She had been living at the court of the Faerie Queene, where her beauty and grace and virtue made her a centre of attraction. By the perversity of Fortune she could not respond to the love of any one of the knights who sought her hand, her affection being centred upon Marinel, a knight of the sea-shore, who did not return her love, perhaps even did not know of it, for he kept aloof from all women (Bk. III, c. iv, v. 26, c. v, v. 9). He had lately encountered Britomart with results disastrous to himself (Bk. III, c. iv, vv. 16, 17), and a report of this conflict had passed through Faerie-land, with the sensational, but happily untrue, addition, that he was dead.

When this rumour reached Florimel, she at once started out to seek Marinel, alive or dead, but she soon got into difficulties, for when we first meet with her in the pages of the *Faerie Queene* she is flying as fast as her steed can carry her from a 'griesly Foster' (III. i. 15 ff.), who was pursuing her with fierce and brutal intent. Prince Arthur and Guyon, who were riding along with Britomart as Florimel flashed by, sprang to her rescue, while Timias, Arthur's squire, went after her pursuer, who soon abandoned his evil purpose and tried to escape. But although Florimel saw that the fierce ruffian was no longer following her, and that it was a knight who was now riding after her, she still

fled from him that ment

To her no evill thought nor evill deed. (III. iv. 50.)

Evening came on, and Arthur lost sight of her in the darkness, but she found shelter in a cottage belonging to a wicked witch, who received her unwillingly, but was moved by her wonderful beauty to have pity on her. The witch's son, a brutish churl, soon frightened her by his attentions, so she

took to flight again, but was pursued by a terrible monster, the Blatant Beast, sent after her by the witch. She reached the sea-shore, and, finding there a boat, sprang into it and pushed off. Her palfrey was killed by the monster, and she lost her golden girdle, but for the moment she herself was saved. Soon, however, she was threatened by a new danger. An old fisherman who had been lying asleep in the boat was astonished, when he woke up, at finding so beautiful a lady there. Again, however, her beauty roused the worst passions of the man, and he rudely seized her. She called aloud and her shrieks and cries brought help, for the god Proteus heard them, and coming swiftly over the waves in his chariot he dragged the fisherman away and beat him severely (III. viii. 31). But even now she was little better off, for Proteus, though at first ready to help her without any selfish motive, soon began to try to win her for himself. He carried her down to his bower beneath the sea [it is evident that the story is now leaving the paths of real life and passing into a region of symbolism] and tempted her, appearing in various forms that might please her fancy. But neither by allurements nor by threats could he move her. She was steadfast in her faithfulness to Marinel, and Spenser breaks out into a paean of admiring praise :

Most virtuous virgin, glory be thy meed,  
And crown of heavenly praise with Saints above,  
Where most sweet hymmes of this thy famous deed  
Are still emongst them song, that far my rymes exceed.

(III. viii. 42.)

Meanwhile, to quiet the lamentations of her son, the witch fashioned a being like to Florimel, put into it a wicked spirit, and dressed it in clothes that Florimel had left behind, so that even those who knew Florimel could not distinguish between them. This false Florimel, after delighting the churl for a little time, was carried off by Braggadocchio, and then was taken from him by Sir Ferraugh, and from him again by Blandamour, whose friend Paridel quarrelled and fought with him for keeping the lady too exclusively to himself.

These knights and many others were on their way to a tournament which had been proclaimed, at which one of the central features was to be the award to the most beautiful lady of the golden girdle that had once belonged to Florimel, and had been found on the sea-shore. When the matter was about to be decided Blandamour brought forward the lady whom all took to be Florimel. There was still trouble about the belt, which, owing to its magic properties could not be worn by most of those who tried it on; and after it had been decided that it must go to the supposed Florimel, a great deal of ill feeling arose on the question of who should be allowed to accompany the holder of the belt. At length she went of her own accord to Braggadocchio, the most worthless of them all, and the meeting broke up in disorder.

The true Florimel, still a prisoner in the dungeon of Proteus, was eventually found by Marinel and set free. Their marriage was the occasion for another tournament, at the end of which a painful sensation was created when Braggadocchio, rudely thrusting aside Florimel, who had spoken graciously to him, brought forward the false Florimel. The crowd was bewildered, and even Marinel was in doubt; but Artegal, coming forward, put the two ladies side by side, when, to the astonishment of all who saw it, the false Florimel melted away to nothing, and left behind only the golden girdle which belonged to the lady whose form and appearance she had so long usurped.

In Florimel we have vividly pictured the type of woman who is very beautiful to look at, and whose purity of character is unassailable, but who has no intellectual gifts, no initiative, no resourcefulness in dealing with difficulty or danger. A novelist of the present day has made one of his characters describe another one in terms that express not inaptly part at least of the idea that Spenser is trying to convey: 'She's just a beautiful statue. But of course that is what men admire. They prefer the ones that don't talk, but merely gape and listen and look beautiful.'<sup>1</sup> And Spenser shows

<sup>1</sup> *The Valley of Indecision*, p. 94 (Christopher Stone).

into what dangers such a gift may lead a woman of this kind. Florimel is happy enough while she remains in the sheltered precincts of the court, but when, on a sudden impulse, she rushes forth to seek the man she loves, she meets with disaster. She has no notion of the difficulties which she will have to face, nor of her complete incompetence to face them. She lives in a state of panic, and blunders on helplessly from one misfortune to another, till she is rescued by means quite unconnected with her own efforts. But, as Spenser shows in his sketch of the false Florimel, beauty is no index to character. The false Florimel is no less beautiful than the true Florimel. She is indeed mistaken for her. But she has no moral principle, and her disposition is evil. Her beauty, however, supported by a certain adroitness, carries her through for some time. It is only when the two are put side by side that the deception breaks down, and the false Florimel simply disappears from our sight.

The whole story is a most effective piece of ethical allegory, and will repay careful study; but the significant point, so far as our present purpose is concerned, lies in the way in which Spenser has handled it. It runs through three successive books, and it will be found that the part of it that is dealt with in each of them belongs strictly to the subject of that book.

In the third book, that of Chastity, we see what an irresistible attraction this type of woman has for men of all kinds. Those of the baser sort—the forester, the churl, and the fisherman—react at once to her beauty; their evil passions flame up, and violence and outrage will follow unless help comes in time. And those of noble mind respond no less readily, though their impulse is to protect and serve, not to harm. We see, too, how dangerous this gift of beauty may be to the woman who does not, along with it, possess the qualities of intellect and decision by which she may protect herself against the attack of evil-minded men; and further, how her impulsiveness brings her into situations which lay her open to the cruel pursuit of slander. It is in this book too that the false Florimel begins her mischievous career, and

is ready to become the complaisant friend of any man who may claim her company.

When the story is resumed in the fourth book—the Book of Friendship—Florimel herself plays but a minor part, while the false Florimel comes to the front, for Spenser is showing us that Beauty, even when allied with Virtue, is not in itself a promoter of Friendship, while Beauty that conceals Vice is a powerful influence for destroying friendship. Accordingly we find that the arrival of the false Florimel on the scene of action is always a signal for the beginning of strife and dissension. It is on her account that a fierce quarrel arises between two friends; at the tournament she is the cause of much bitterness; and later in the same book we find her again the centre of a violent contest in which four knights are fighting furiously, and it takes all the strength and influence of Arthur to quiet their wrath.

In the fifth book, in accordance with its theme, Justice is meted out with an even hand. Florimel's goodness and purity of heart are vindicated; she is restored to her friends, and united to the man she has loved so faithfully; while the pretensions of the false Florimel vanish away into nothingness when confronted with the truth.

We have seen how a story of some intricacy, running through the very parts of the poem that have been judged to be most carelessly put together, is in reality handled in such a way that in each book it is directly related to the idea with which, according to Spenser's plan, that book was intended to deal. This can hardly be by accident, and it may make us wonder whether the charge of carelessness in the handling of his subject, which is often brought against the poet, should not lie more deservedly at the door of the critic.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The brief account of the *Faerie Queene* given by Professor de Sélin-court in his Introduction to the Oxford edition of Spenser seems to me to suggest a much sounder view of the poem than is usually met with; but he repeats what I believe to be the mistaken charge of looseness of construction. 'Its plot as originally designed was loose enough, and in the process of development it has become looser still' (p. 1).

It is now more than three hundred years since the *Faerie Queene* was given to the world, and on the surface it may seem very remote from life as we know it to-day. But as soon as we get beneath the surface to the ideas that Spenser is trying to convey, we are more impressed with its close and intimate bearing upon the problems with which we are still concerned. Only a very bold man would dare to assert that self-restraint, chastity, justice, and courtesy are the qualities most sought after in the world to-day ; and yet we may be sure that until they are cultivated, not merely by a few, but by men and women generally, there will not be much progress towards a better order of society. - Spenser looks at life with much of the same breadth and sanity that we find in the greatest of his contemporaries, and his vision is scarcely less searching. But while the crowds that flocked to the Globe Theatre to see *Hamlet* and *King Lear* and *The Tempest* were able to catch at least a large part of their meaning, those who turn to Spenser's poem find his thoughts so hidden under a veil of allegory that, seeing, they have seen and not perceived.

But the *Faerie Queene* is worth a more patient and thorough study than has yet been given to it. The more searching tests that bring to light the flaws and failures of inferior art serve but to reveal fresh beauties in the works of greater men ; and it may be said with truth of the *Faerie Queene* that it is a poem that calls for neither apology nor defence ; it needs only to be understood.

H. CLEMENT NOTCUTT.

THE PLAN OF THE FOURTH BOOK OF  
*THE FAERIE QUEENE*

*Introductory Episode :*

Amoret with Britomart (Link with Book III)

Britomart befriends the young knight :

(Friendship to strangers.)

ATE—‘Mother of debate and all dissension.’ (c. I.)

(P) ‘*Fayned Friendship*’ of Blandamour and Paridel.

‘Lasted but a while.’ Até intervenes.

(c. II.)

(Q) CAMEL and TRIAMOND.

Strife and reconciliation in public life :

Cambina’s magic draught. (cc. II., III., IV.)

(R) *The Quarrels* that arose in the contest for the *Golden Belt* of Florimel. (c. V.)

BRITOMART meets ARTEGAL  
(from Book III) (from Book V). (c. VI.)

(R<sup>1</sup>) *The Reconciliation* of the Squire and Belphoebe by means of the *Ruby Heart*. (cc. VII., VIII.)

(Q<sup>1</sup>) ARTHUR.

The healing and reconciling power in private life. His magic liquid. (cc. VII., VIII., IX.)

(P<sup>1</sup>) ‘*True Friendship*’ of Amyas and Placidas.

‘Aspiring to eternal fame.’ Arthur intervenes. (c. IX.)

CONCORD—‘Mother of blessed peace and Friendship trew.’ (c. X.)

*Supplementary Episode :*

The Marriage of the Thames and the Medway.

(Friendship in Nature.)

The Release of Florimel.

(Preparation for Book V.)

(cc. XI., XII.)

## CANADIAN LITERATURE: THE BEGINNINGS

CANADA has been called 'the least literary of the colonies', 'a country without a soul'. A President of Harvard believed that no colonial government had ever evoked the nobility of soul essential to greatness. Still, even in the colonial period, and, in increasing volume since the colonies united to form a new nation, books of all kinds have been written by Canadians about Canada. History, travel, biography, verse, fiction, essays, have appeared in hundreds of volumes in French and English. The majority of these native-born writers are, it is true, not known outside their own province, but some are famous. If this total product of more than a century be not literature, some new term must be invented to denote it.

Canadians are a humble-minded folk. With the dazzling material prosperity of the United States on the one hand, and the secular glory of England's achievement in war, government, and literature on the other, they are constitutionally unable to think highly of what they themselves have accomplished. No question is more often or more hotly debated in Canada than 'Have we a literature?' and many of our younger intellectuals have answered it, to their own satisfaction, in the negative. Some acquaintance with the historical facts would tend to aid the understanding and compose the dispute, both within the Dominion and outside its borders; but until recent years the subject has not been studied seriously, nor have the results of these studies become widely known. Halden's two volumes on the schools of Quebec and Montreal, Ray Palmer Baker's sketch of *English-Canadian Literature till Confederation*, and V. L. O. Chittick's monograph on Haliburton are sound in scholarship and helpful in criticism. There is even a series of small handbooks on individual

authors, 'Makers of Canadian Literature'. Mathematics knows imaginary quantities, but how can the most ingenious writer treat of literature which does not exist?

In what is now Canada, there have been five distinct literary movements. At first, they have been identified with local centres, the chief cities of the different provinces. They have been accompanied by a periodical literature, and they have been strongly influenced by local pride and local historical feeling.

The story begins in Halifax, the capital of Nova Scotia, because this province being nearest to Europe was the first to be settled and organized into a government. Halifax was a flat city, built in a brief lull between two wars; to counterpoise Louisbourg the French stronghold in the Island of Cape Breton. It was built, not for commerce but for war, as a military necessity, as a naval base, and it has been a pivotal point in four great wars. From its very foundation in the mid-eighteenth century, Halifax has been a city acquainted with books and imbued with literary taste. When New France was in its last agonies under its Bigots and Vaudreuil, or drained after the Cession, but for its clergy, of its educated class, and when the rest of the present Dominion was chiefly virgin forest, Halifax had its books and booksellers, its bookbinders, and even its book auctions, its own newspapers, and its own magazines. From 1785 on, Halifax had a flourishing theatre. Thus Nova Scotia leads in the intellectual development of Canada.

It is now generally admitted that the cruel expulsion of the Loyalists from the United States after the success of the Revolution deprived the new country of its educated class. 'The aristocracy of culture, of dignified professions and callings, of official rank and hereditary wealth', was, in a large measure, found among the 'Tories'. A clear majority of clergymen, physicians, lawyers, and teachers were opposed to the ultimate measures of the American Revolution. Confirmation of this view is found in the history of Nova Scotia. In the year 1783 Loyalists from New York to the number of 25,000 settled in this province. Amongst them were

200 Harvard graduates, besides many more from lesser institutions. Now it was precisely during this period of Loyalist immigration that the first provincial magazine flourished.

In July, 1789, the year of the Rights of Man, there appeared in Halifax the first number of *The Nova Scotia Magazine and Comprehensive Review of Literature, Politics, and News*. This was a monthly magazine of eighty pages with double columns, printed in rather small type. The editor was a Loyalist who had been Professor of Classics in King's College, New York, and the printer was a Loyalist from Boston, young John Howe, who was to beget a famous son. The title is adorned with two learned mottoes. The first, *Orientia tempora notis Instruit exemplis*, declares the editor's purpose, while the second, *Scribentem Iuvat ipse favor, minuitque laborem*, hints delicately at consideration and support. The magazine is necessarily a compilation from the best contemporary periodicals, as the editorial preface declares, but, even so, it leaves no doubt as to the tastes of the constituency for which it caters. Literature comes first in the sub-title and first in fact. The opening article is historical, retrospective, and appeals to a local patriotism, which was even then evidently strong. It is a reprint of the life of Sir William Alexander, court favourite of James I, the original grantee of Nova Scotia, taken entire from the *Biographia Britannica*. The preface is confident that 'Everything that is connected with the history of this province must be interesting to the people who inhabit it'. One feature is a long list of new books classified according to subject, and taken with due acknowledgement from *The Analytical Review*. There are extracts from du Paty and from Mr Gibbon's new history of the Roman Empire, Collins's *Ode on Highland Superstitions* is printed in full. Much space is given to the debates in the British House of Commons. There are echoes of notable happenings in France and England, the appeal of Philippe Egalité to representatives in his bailiwicks finds a place beside the protest of Warren Hastings. Ten pages are devoted to foreign, and perhaps a column and a half to local, news. The list of subscribers appears in the first

number, and contains names of families which have been prominent in the life of the city from that day to this. It also contains the names of several officers of the 4th King's Regiment, amongst them young Lieutenant Dyott, whose scandalous memoirs throw a lurid light on the good old times. In a note to the second volume the editor expresses the hope that the magazine 'may long continue an evidence of the literary taste of the Province, and a record of its prosperity and happiness'. The evidence of taste is beyond dispute; but the pious wish for length of days was not granted. *The Nova Scotia Magazine* came to an end in 1791, with the ebbing of the Loyalist population.

Next in significance, if not in time, is *The Acadian Magazine*, the first number of which appeared in 1826. This was also a large, double-columned monthly, modelled on *Blackwood's*, and boldly venturing upon illustrations. Embellishments appear to lighten the letterpress—views of beautiful Windsor and the stately Province House, with portraits of Canning and the Duke of York. Local patriotism has grown apace. This is no longer a compilation but a magazine in the modern sense. Contributors from all parts of the province and beyond it send in articles, sketches, letters, poems. Between 1789 and 1826, when the *Acadian* began its all too brief career, a new generation had grown up, proud of their province, and the things that were theirs by right of birth. In the first volume is a series of articles called 'Characteristics of Nova Scotia', with Scott's proud line for motto :

This is my own, my native land.

More direct evidence of this feeling is found in this sentence : 'We . . . without assumed ostentation or empty arrogance must declare that Nova Scotia possesses many legitimate sources of pride.' The writer mentions with approval two poems which seem to herald a native literary movement. The first is *The Rising Village*, by Oliver Goldsmith, grand-nephew of his great namesake. Its avowed purpose is to prove that the poor exiles of sweet Auburn are better off in the new land. The second, *Melville Island*, was the first attempt of

Joseph Howe to express his love for the natural beauty of his native province, in this case, for the winding fiord called the North West Arm; on the shore of which he was born. The *Acadian* prints such rarities as a translation of one of Michael Angelo's madrigals, evidently to gratify the taste of such readers as founded the old Halifax Library, and bought first editions of *Imaginary Conversations* to put in it. The standard of taste maintained by this magazine has not been surpassed by any later colonial periodical.

From this time on, the political and intellectual history of Nova Scotia is largely the history of two men, who worked zealously, each in his own way, for its advancement. The great twin brethren are Joseph Howe and Thomas Chandler Haliburton. Howe was a Haligonian born and bred; he had little formal schooling, and at thirteen began his apprenticeship to journalism in his father's printing-office. To his father, whom he venerated, he owed his familiarity with Shakespeare and the Bible, and his knowledge of old colonial history and customs.

An important event in the intellectual progress of the province was Howe's purchase of the weekly newspaper, *The Novascotian*. Under his editorship it quickly became the leading journal in what are now called the Maritime Provinces, with readers in the United States and even in Great Britain. Howe did everything, from reporting the debates in the Assembly and writing the leading articles to setting the type. He was a good example of the early nineteenth-century journalist, Carlyle's 'Preaching Friar,' who 'settles himself in every village, and builds a pulpit which he calls Newspaper'. One feature of *The Novascotian* was 'The Club', meetings of stock characters after the manner of the *Noctes Ambrosianae*. How close Howe kept in touch with the best in contemporary literature is shown by his reprinting *The Canadian Boat Song* within six weeks after it appeared in *Blackwood's*. Haliburton and Sir John Kincaid were members of 'The Club'.

Howe and Haliburton are also associated in the production, in 1829, of the first history of a British American province, *An Historical and Statistical Account of Nova Scotia*. Hali-

burton was the writer, or compiler, and Howe the publisher. It is a handsome work in two volumes of more than 800 pages ; paper and type are good ; and, except for the proof-reading, it is well printed. and it is 'Illustrated by a map of the province and several engravings'. The motive is patriotic. On the title-page appears again Scott's line :

This is my own, my native land.

Like the stately Province Building and Government House, Haliburton's *Nova Scotia* is a monument of provincial pride. For this achievement he received the formal thanks of the Assembly, a rare honour.

The first volume is the 'historical account', covering the centuries from the voyage of Cabot to the Peace of Paris in 1763, when, for Haliburton, the history of the province ends. 'The uniform tranquility and repose which Nova Scotia has since enjoyed affords us no material for an historical narrative', he writes as a sort of colophon, and then adds inconsistently 'A Chronological Table of events connected with and illustrative of the History of Nova Scotia', from 1763 to 1828, which is as artless as the annals of a medieval chronicler.

Haliburton's is the first history of a Canadian province ; it is planned on an ambitious scale ; it was a labour of love, in the face of many difficulties such as paucity and inaccessibility of materials. Its most noteworthy chapter tells the world for the first time the pathetic story of the expulsion of the Acadians. Haliburton represented a constituency largely French, and was particularly sympathetic towards them. Inaccurate and generously *ex parte* as his statements are, they had a great influence. They inspired Catherine Williams's novel, *The Neutral French*, which in turn was used by Longfellow in the composition of *Evangeline*. It was through an aunt of Haliburton's that the tale of the separated lovers, the *idée mère* of the famous poem, came to Longfellow's knowledge.

The second volume is devoted to the 'statistical account' of the province. It is a survey of the whole peninsula and Cape

Breton, district by district, compiled by various hands. Not only does it deal with the natural features, resources, settlements, industries of each county, but it represents the contemporary point of view. To Nova Scotians it has almost the value of Garrison's *Description of England* to students of the Elizabethan age, a mass of data and opinion not elsewhere accessible.

At this time Halifax was not incorporated, but was governed by the Justices of the Peace. They represented the wealth and the social and political power of the city. For a long time their unquestioned rule had caused deep discontent, as they were responsible to no one. In 1820 the general discontent found expression in an anonymous pamphlet roundly accusing the Justices of malfeasance in office. The author was discovered, indicted for criminal libel, found guilty, and sentenced to two years' imprisonment with hard labour. With Wilkie's fate before his eyes, Howe published in *The Nova-scotian* on New Year's Day, 1835, a letter signed 'The People'. It repeated Wilkie's offence. It charged the magistrates bluntly with putting the taxes they collected into their own pockets. Although Howe was not the author, he assumed full responsibility. He was indicted for criminal libel. No lawyer in the city would undertake his defence. Howe read the law of criminal libel for a fortnight, conducted his own case, and, in a five-hours' speech to the jury, secured his acquittal. The people of Halifax went wild with joy. Howe was carried out of the court-room on the shoulders of the crowd. The city was illuminated, and the popular enthusiasm was not stilled for several days.

The libel trial revealed Howe's power of natural eloquence to himself and to the province. It opened his brilliant and tragic political career, but it diverted him from literature. In his own phrase, 'Poetry was the maiden I courted, politics was the harridan I married'. Henceforward, until his death as Lieutenant-Governor in Government House, his life is the history of his native province. Nova Scotia is a dream of Howe's. His 'Speeches and Public Letters', unlike most oratory, bear the sharpest analysis, both for matter and form.

What Canadian literature lost when Howe deviated into politics may be judged from a single sentence : 'A wise nation preserves its records, gathers up its muniments, repairs its great public structures, decorates the tombs of its illustrious dead, and fosters national pride and love of country by perpetual reference to the sacrifices and glories of the past.'

The same year that Howe struck down the local Bumble, and asserted once for all the freedom of the colonial press, a series of sketches began to appear in his paper, entitled *Recollections of Nova Scotia*. They caught the public fancy. In 1836 they were collected and published in Halifax as *The Clockmaker, or The Sayings and Doings of Samuel Slick of Slickville*, with Howe's imprint. The next year these sketches of colonial life were published in London, and Sam Slick, the Yankee pedlar, who wins his way by 'soft sawder' and his knowledge of 'human natur', took his place as a figure in literature. His creator, the colonial judge, became famous. Ultimately Haliburton removed to England and entered the House of Commons, he married an English lady, as his second wife, and he was a member of the Athenaeum Club. Oxford recognized his merit by bestowing an honorary degree. In England he died and was buried. As a crusted colonial Tory he found England more congenial than his native province delivered over to 'Reform' by his personal friend and political antagonist, Joseph Howe.

The emergence of Haliburton from provincial obscurity and the immediate and long-continued popularity of Sam Slick are noteworthy facts in the development of English literature overseas. Haliburton was born, bred, and educated in the province; he was formed by it, and he put forth his hand upon material supplied by the province. His original purpose was to sketch provincial manners, and by the thorns of satire rouse his countrymen from the depression they had fallen into during the twenty dark years which followed Waterloo. For, almost as much as Howe, he was a lover of Nova Scotia, and laboured consistently, even in his later years of ease in England, for her welfare. But he went far beyond his original intention. In creating Sam Slick he uncovered the rich mine of American

humour. Sam is the same kind of 'cute' Yankee as the real-estate agent in *Martin Chuzzlewit*. Lots in Eden, shoe-peg oats, clocks in Nova Scotia, all existed like the famous razors—to sell. *Caveat emptor!* Smartness, bragging, exaggeration, mark Sam's language and character. His peculiar Yankee dialect is accepted as typical. His sayings had wide currency. Justin McCarthy says in his *Portraits of the Sixties* that, when he first came to London, the sayings of Sam Slick were as well known as the sayings of Sam Weller. Professor R. P. Baker has come upon two hundred separate editions of Haliburton's works. The 'slick' Yankee pedlar was accepted as enthusiastically in the United States as in England. Philarète Chasles and Émile Montégut made Haliburton the theme of serious critiques.

*Slick* appeared as a challenge from the New World to the Old. To Chasles there is something mysterious about the strange little volume, with its grimaces, its exclamations, and its italics, that had dropped from nowhere into the salons of Paris as if to question all accepted canons. Its author is not, he writes in surprise, a lyric or an epic poet in whose verse are mirrored the beauty and grandeur of his native land. *The Clockmaker* is a type in itself. Until its advent, Americans had kept their eyes fixed on Europe, and their prose and verse had been feeble reflections of Old World splendour. *Slick*, interrupting the tradition of subservience, is the first sign of a new civilization.<sup>1</sup>

Two other series of *The Clockmaker* sketches followed the original success. They are usually all combined in one volume. In *The Attaché*, Haliburton attempted to do for England what Dickens had done for the United States in *American Notes*. Sam Slick visits England with satirical intent, having as much respect for the effete institutions of the old country as Jefferson Brick. He had already found many faults and failings amongst the Bluenoses to hold up to ridicule. In contrast to the Americans, they were lazy, lacking in enterprise, and besotted with politics. The English also might naturally be expected to fall short of Sam Slick's exalted standards. *The Attaché* was a partial failure.

<sup>1</sup> Baker, *History of English-Canadian Literature*, p. 68.

*Bubbles of Canada* and the *Reply to Lord Durham* are bitter anti-Reform pamphlets. With Papineau and Mackenzie, even with the moderate Reformers, he had no sympathy whatever. He was capable of believing that anarchy in the United States was due to the lack of a state church. Of far greater value to Canadians is *The Old Judge, or Life in a Colony*; for it presents the manners and conditions of a Canadian province in its pioneer stage. Philippe de Gaspé has depicted life in Quebec under the French régime and in the early nineteenth century. His two books, *Les Anciens Canadiens*, which has been translated by Charles G. D. Roberts, and his *Mémoires*, are precious records of the French province. Mrs. Moodie's *Roughing it in the Bush* and Mrs. Jameson's *Winter Studies and Summer Rambles* have the same importance for the province of Ontario. But Haliburton was more deliberate in purpose and more popular in style. *The Old Judge* stands head and shoulders above all others which picture the origins of the Canadian people. Haliburton has humour, at times Rabelaisian, he has keen observation, and he has the story-telling gift.

The book contains fine pages of description such as that of the old Loyalist town of Shelburne, once so populous and now so desolate. 'The Seasons' chapter traces once for all the procession of the months in Nova Scotia and life in Halifax under the royal governors. Haliburton's powers of humour and satire find full play in his sketches of society in the provincial capital, the General, the Admiral, the Governor and his little court, the climbers and the snobs.

The significance of Haliburton is not slight. His career shows that provincial origin, training, and culture are no bar to literary success. He is far more than a satirist of provincial weaknesses and a painter of provincial manners. By his humour he has a universal appeal. But his greatest achievement is the creation of a new literary figure, the smooth-tongued, wily Yankee pedlar. How widely this character is understood, even by those who never read a line of *The Clockmaker*, is clear from a sentence in *Canada in Flanders* (p. 118): 'After a successful *ruse de guerre* by the Canadian

forces, German wireless announced that 'a desperate attack has been heavily repulsed', but the general sense of the enemy was more accurately represented by a 'hyphenated' voice that cried out peevishly next evening: 'Say, Sam Slick, no dirty tricks to-night!'

The local patriotism, which made head so early, was intensified by the political struggles before and after Confederation. Nova Scotia became more and more a self-contained, self-sufficing cultural unit, until its union with the Canadas and New Brunswick compelled a different orientation. Halifax, the little capital, with its tradition of culture and wealth and Britain's wars by land and sea, remained, and still remains, as a source of literary inspiration.

James De Mille came of Loyalist blood on both sides of the house, and he was born in the Loyalist city of Saint John, but his life work was done in Nova Scotia. From 1861 to 1864 he was Professor of Classics at Acadia. Migrating to Dalhousie College, Halifax, in the latter year, he became Professor of Rhetoric and History, a position he held until his death in 1880. He died at the age of 46, but he had some thirty books to his credit, for he wielded a fluent pen. His first publication was a story of the early Christians, called *The Martyrs of the Catacombs* (1865), followed in 1867 by *Helena's Household*, a longer and better tale on the same theme. Like Haliburton's, his first success was humorous and dealt with American character. This was *The Dodge Club*, which appeared as a serial in *Harper's Monthly Magazine* in 1868. It may have been suggested by his own European tour in 1850-1 with his elder brother. Here he struck the vein of comic travels from the irreverent American point of view, anticipating Mark Twain's *Innocents Abroad*, which was published in the following year. Six of De Mille's novels were published by Harpers, one of which, *The American Baron*, was translated into French and went through several editions in that form. Appletons published *An Open Question* and *The Judy of the Ice*, which seems to have been adapted for the stage. He also wrote nine books for the boys, the B. O. W. C.—Brotherhood of the White Cross—series. They are based in part on his schoolboy

experiences at Horton, and they are the only books of his which owe anything to the province of Nova Scotia.

His novels are facile imitations of prevailing literary fashions such as Wilkie Collins and Eugène Sue, but only a scholar, with more than a touch of genius, could have written these light amusing works. There is fun, brisk succession of incident, and capital situations in these despised 'pot-boilers', as the author himself named them. Even in the lurid *Cord and Creese*, which has enthralled many a boy, the description of the Greek play, of Langhetti's music, and the scene of the lovers in the church, show what he might have done. Among his books preserved in Dalhousie College Library are hymnologies of the Greek Church, a beautiful set of Euripides, works in modern Greek, Sanskrit, and Persian, showing signs of use, as well as French, German, and Italian classics with pencilled marginalia, all attesting the breadth of his intellectual interests. After his death his best book, *A Strange Manuscript Found in a Copper Cylinder*, was published by Harpers. It anticipates such romances as *King Solomon's Mines*, being a tale of wild adventures in an Antarctic Topsy-turvydom, where lovers fly about on tame pterodactyls, and utter unselfishness is the chief aim of the highly civilized (but cannibal) inhabitants. It presents a complete transvaluation of values, as appears from one character's account of himself:

I was born . . . in the most enviable of positions. My father and mother were among the poorest in the land. Both died when I was a child, and I never knew them. I grew up in the open field, and public caverns, along with the most esteemed paupers, but there was something wanting in my natural disposition. I loved death, of course, and poverty too, very strongly, but I did not have that eager and energetic passion which is so desirable, nor was I watchful enough over my blessed state of poverty. Surrounded as I was by those who were only too eager to take advantage of my ignorance, or want of vigilance, I soon fell into evil ways, and gradually in spite of myself I found wealth pouring in upon me. Designing men succeeded in winning my consent to receive their possessions; and so I gradually fell away from that lofty position in which I was born. I grew richer and richer. My friends warned me in

vain. I was too weak to resist ; in fact, I lacked moral fibre and never learned to say ' No '. So I went on, descending lower and lower in the scale of being. I became a capitalist, an Athon, a general officer, and finally Kohen.

Halifax is the cradle of Canadian literature. About its wharves and forts and star-shaped citadel clings the romance of ancient wars by land and sea. The literary impulse which began here nearly a century and a half ago is by no means spent. A modern instance of this impulse still potent is to be found in *The Book of the High Romance*, by Michael Williams, a Haligonian born and bred. It is an odyssey of the soul in search of faith, and the quest ends in the Roman communion. The first portion, 'The Crystal House', sketches his childhood and youth in Halifax ; and it contains rare vignettes of life in the old garrison town. His father was a sea-captain who died of yellow fever, leaving his family ill provided. Williams had to leave school and go to work. Life in Halifax is punctuated by the gun which is fired at noon and at half-past nine at night ; and as the boy waited at the warehouse window for release at midday, thoughts like these shaped themselves in his mind :

Every day at noon a cannon was fired from the ramparts of Fort St. George on Citadel Hill. While its explosion was shaking the air, hundreds upon hundreds of pigeons would mount up from the streets in swirling, interweaving, rising and falling intricacies of flight, the sunshine gleaming on their feathers of white, of pale purple, of softly iridescent blues and greys and mauves. Then they would mass and sweep in long looping lines to and fro—an arabesque of life traced upon the sky, a thrilling rhythm made visible. At last, reaching the roof of the Post Office in the market square, they would separate and settle with fluttering wings and pink reaching claws, while their soft liquid cooings came distinctly to my ears as I stood fascinated at a window. At these moments, the sense of my captivity would well up behind the starting tears, like a wave that carries spray on its crest.

ARCHIBALD MACMECHAN.

## SCOTTISH BALLADS: THEIR EVIDENCE OF AUTHORSHIP AND ORIGIN

### I

A SCOTS professor of the blunt old school was asked in company what he thought of German philosophy. Bored as much by the subject as by the conversation, he retorted with the epigram, 'Water that's drumlie is nae aye deep'. The professorial deliverance is an appropriate vent to the impatience of students of the traditional ballad at the ingenious theories of ballad-origins which during the past generation have come to be the fashion. The simplicity and naturalness of the popular ballad, justly and universally extolled, are not recaptured in the treatises of those who concern themselves with its beginnings and its history. For the moment it is considered highly improper, in most realms of investigation, to prefer ancient opinions to modern; yet it is a fact, admitted by every collector of ballads from oral popular tradition, that Walter Scott's *Introductory Remarks on Popular Poetry*, written in March 1830, are nearer the truth of the matter than all the many volumes on the subject which have appeared since. The reasons are four in number and perfectly sufficient. Scott had more than the average endowment of common sense, he was steeped in the essential spirit of the old balladists; his knowledge of ballads was gathered from observing them personally in their natural environment; and in substance our available knowledge of traditional minstrelsy has scarcely increased since he and Shortreed made their 'raids' into the fastnesses of Liddesdale. The purpose of this essay is belligerent. It is an endeavour to confute the notions of origin and authorship with which ballad-criticism teems. Miss Louise Pound, Professor of

English in the University of Nebraska, has already—in her *Poetic Origins and the Ballad* (1921)—joined battle on their own ground with the supporters of the communal theory of balladry's beginnings. The present writer will supplement her arguments with others derived from a fairly close study of Scottish ballads, both as they exist in popular circulation at the present time and as they have been recorded by the collectors of the past. The internationality of the ballads is so extensive, their characteristics so similar in every clime where they flourish, that in examining the ballads of Scotland the researcher might be investigating those of any country; and arguments drawn from the traditional minstrelsy of Scotland can with equal pertinence be found in the balladry of England, of Germany, or of Scandinavia.

The student of ballads whose material is confined to the 305 items in Professor Child's *English and Scottish Popular Ballads* is at a certain disadvantage. Child's work is magnificent and invaluable, but it does not clearly differentiate between ballads taken direct from oral tradition and ballads which may or may not have been traditionally current, but of which the only extant examples are preserved in broadside and chapbook prints or in early manuscripts. On the evidence of print or manuscript, unsupported by traditional versions or by explicit testimony that such print or manuscript was compiled from oral delivery, we are not entitled to class a ballad as traditional. It may have been, but we do not know. So little of our knowledge of ballads is absolute that everything of the savour of doubt has to be excluded from our material. On the other hand, there are ballads, of which our first versions are printed, like 'The Elfin Knight' (broadside of about 1670), which have been recovered from tradition time and again. Whether the traditional texts are derived from the print, or the print based on contemporary tradition, cannot be ascertained. We know that in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries it was a common practice for enterprising Scottish printers to get traditional ballads 'written up' by hacks, cheaply printed, and sold by hawkers from door to door or at fairs throughout the country. In such

cases nice distinctions may be dispensed with, and the general rule applied that ballads in oral circulation are traditional ballads.

## II

In ballad-criticism the fundamental questions of beginnings and authorship are hotly disputed. If we fix the approximate period of the ballad's appearance we go a long way towards solving the problem of authorship. The first recorded versions of ballads in Scotland, taken from tradition, do not go back beyond 1700. Previous to that date British ballad versions existed, in England for the most part, in manuscripts and cheap prints, but we have assurances that traditional singing was encountered in the fourteenth century. John Barbour, writing in 1376, mentions a folk-song, on an historical episode, which may or may not have been a ballad; in the *Complaynte of Scotlund*, 1549, we read of a number of 'pleys and storeis', of which twenty seem to be of British folk-character, which were 'told' by the shepherds and their womenkind, and of other thirty-seven pieces ('sueit melodius sangis of the antiquite') which were *sung* by the same company. Most of the twenty 'storeis' can be linked up with traditional ballads, and among the 'sangis' there are historical ballads of which versions have been recovered since—'The Battle of Otterburn', 'The Hunting of the Cheviot', and 'The Battle of Harlaw'. Of a score of popular ditties mentioned in *Peblis to the Play*, *Colkelbie's Sow*, and Douglas's *Eneados*, not one is of the narrative, or ballad, type. In Child's collection, only eleven texts can be dated with certainty before 1600, and although none of them looks like a ballad taken from oral circulation, we need not quarrel with the assumption that they were 'popular'. Some of them doubtless were traditional. The Percy Manuscript, the first solid collection of English ballad material, dates between 1620 and 1650, and appears to have been compiled from oral sources.

The unassailable facts at our disposal regarding the emergence of the ballad are, therefore, that prior to the middle of

the fifteenth century we have no ballad text of an indubitably traditional quality, and that until 1500 the evidences of ballads in oral usage as folk-songs are faint indeed. The date of the oldest Danish ballad text is about 1450, and the late W. P. Ker, the leading literary authority of our day on the Dark Ages, put the period of the ballad's emergence at a point not earlier than 1200, when written history was temporarily suspended. That the ballad did not appear in a night, or arise suddenly like Aphrodite from the sea, is obvious. It was a development of some earlier type, and that development, in view of the intellectual conditions, may have been slower than is usual in other literary forms. It is not unreasonable to suggest that three centuries before 1550 were consumed before the transition from the unidentified parent form, or forms, to the ballad as we now know it was accomplished. For three centuries after 1550 the ballad form was fairly stable, but within the last generation or two, it is interesting to note, another change began to work, shorter and more concise versions of the older, lengthier ballads making their appearance.

A certain number of ballads can be dated with rather more precision than the rest. When a ballad centres upon an historical event we at least know that it could not have preceded that event. There is, of course, always the possibility that older ballads may have been altered to fit fresh incidents, but it is no more than a possibility, and is shown, by a study of ballads influenced by occurrences subsequent to those which provided their main themes, to deserve much less emphasis than has been placed upon it. There is significance in the following facts. 'The Battle of Harlaw' was not recorded from tradition till four hundred years after the battle itself, over a century elapsed between the engagement of Otterburn and the appearance of the first English and probably traditional text of the ballad of 'Otterburn', while the first Scottish record is two hundred and fifty years later; the earlier Robin Hood ballads occur in manuscripts at least two hundred years subsequent to the outlaw's death—if he ever existed; whereas 'Sir Andrew Barton' follows the last fight

of the Scottish seaman (1511) at a short interval of only fifty years, and the burning of the House of Towie, in 1571, gave rise to 'Captain Car' within a very few years. Thereafter, historical ballads come hard on the heels of the events they commemorate. In Child's collection, excluding the Robin Hood group and some late chapbook and broadside doggerel, there are sixty-nine ballads dealing with actual personages or historical occurrences. Of these, thirteen refer to pre-1500 events and persons, the subjects of six lie between 1500 and 1550, and only one or two of the remaining fifty are later than the period 1550-1700. This circumstance also indicates that before 1550 the art of making and singing ballads was only coming into fashion, and that the 'golden age' of the ballad commenced after that date, and lasted through the seventeenth century. Professor Kittredge pleads that many medieval ballads must have been lost, by accident or for want of collectors; but it is curious that the ardent antiquarians of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries could not recover more than a handful of specimens of 200-300 years old, when in the beginning of the twentieth century, with traditional minstrelsy fallen into decay, Scottish collectors could find many versions of ballads concerned with events of three hundred years ago.

The analogies between British and Continental ballads have provoked a great deal of speculation since Robert Jamieson first pointed out similarities between certain Scottish and Scandinavian versions. Professor Gummere noted three distinct theories of explanation: mutual borrowing, 'a common European or Aryan fund of popular tradition'; and 'spontaneous and independent production of similar narratives'. Cautiously refusing to commit himself definitely to any one theory, Gummere accepted Mullenhoff's proposition that 'every song, every tale, legend, myth, must be studied primarily on its own ground in its own local associations'. Separate examination of each individual ballad is essential, but to go no farther in the study of balladry as a whole is to shirk the main question. The common stock of atavistic tradition may have mixed some small ingredients in the minstrelsy of various

peoples, but we cannot explain by its means such close coincidences of detail as occur in 'Binorie', 'The Duke of Perth's Three Daughters', and 'Hind Horn', and their European parallels. 'Independent production of similar narratives' is also probable in view of the nature of ballad plots, which are frequently and obviously drawn from occurrences common in the ordinary experience of semi-civilized communities; but it does not account for the large number of similarities both in subject and expression.

Mutual borrowing, however, does fit the vast majority of parallelisms. Such give-and-take is, as I shall show presently, an integral part of the processes of tradition. Between British and Scandinavian ballads the closest likenesses are found. From very early times there was much political intercourse between Scotland and Denmark. From the sixteenth century onwards a second line of communication, in trade, was established; England also opened diplomatic and commercial relations with the north. From the middle of the seventeenth century the business intercourse between the north-east of Scotland and Norway became so intimate that in Bergen a regular colony of Aberdeenshire people was founded, from members of which Edward Grieg, the Norwegian composer, was descended. And it is clearly significant, in the light of this fact, that of all British ballads those of Aberdeenshire are most reminiscent of Scandinavian versions. The resemblances between Peter Buchan's Aberdeenshire gleanings and Danish ballads were so frequent and striking that a translator of the latter, three-quarters of a century ago, was moved to accuse Buchan of stealing from the Danish versions. Of modern parallels a single example will suffice. Of Child's twenty-seven versions of 'Binorie' ('The Twa Sisters'), two are from Aberdeenshire. These two and one other in his collection make the elder sister 'dun' and the younger a blonde, as in most of the Norse versions. Eleven Aberdeenshire versions recovered since Child's death have the same characteristic. Again in none of Child's records does the drowning sister refuse to give up her lover to her rival and murderer; some of the

Norse forms contain this refusal ; and it occurs—for the first time in the British ballad—in four of the eleven recent Aberdeenshire texts. From Scottish history alone, without reference to the annals of England, we know that after the institution of the Scots Universities many of their graduates and alumni travelled the Continent ; from the sixteenth century onwards Scottish soldiers of fortune, lairds' sons, students, and traders were moving in large numbers throughout the Continent ; and that they were the agents who introduced into Scottish ballads the influence of the Continental forms, and vice versa, no one who is acquainted with the habits of tradition will doubt. These influences, it will be noted, were at work during the period which I have concluded to be the zenith of the art of balladry.

### III

The second, and most vexatious, problem of ballad origins, that of authorship, has come to be drenched in a fog of speculation. This riddle, at least, has not been 'wisely expounded'. Three solutions have been suggested—composition by the folk, or festal throngs; composition by homogeneous groups of individuals; and composition by single individuals, worked over time and again by various minds subsequently. The first is Grimm's theory. It is vague, and has in any case affinities with the fairy-tales in which he specialized. As it became the parent of the second, an effort has been made to defend it, not on the ground that it is probable, but on the plea that it cannot mean what it is held to mean. Gummere, Kittredge, and many other commentators, without accepting Grimm's theory to the limit, have nevertheless, perhaps unconsciously, constituted it the landmark towards which they have directed their steps. There is, indeed, little to choose between the Grimm conception of a festal throng and the Gummere-Kittredge idea of a homogeneous group—dance-party, family-party, or what not—spontaneously or in collaboration composing ballads. Gummere is the chief protagonist of the communal theory, although his system differs considerably in

detail from the 'throng' conception of Grimm. And Gummere's fundamental postulate, which he attempted with vast learning and inexhaustible skill to prove an axiom, is that poetry at its beginnings is communally composed in the excitement of dancing. In his *Popular Ballad*, a most ingenious and stimulating study, he sought to identify ballads as the last survivals of that primeval poetry. Primitive men, it is argued, cannot create individually until they have created communally or chorally, and in support are cited the song-and-dance of the Botocudos of South America, the improvisations of the Faroe Islanders and of cigarette-makers in South Russia, and children's game-songs in civilized countries, all these being taken as examples of uncultured versification. Miss Pound, as I have said, met the communalists on their own terrain with the facts that such savage races of the present day as the Akkas of West Africa, the Andaman Islanders, the Australian Bushmen, the Maori, the Semang of Malaya, the Seri of Mexico, the Esquimaux, and the North American Indians, dance without singing, sing without dancing, or possess individual bards who provide the tribal poetry. What has been called improvisation by children at play never extends to more than a word at a time, and then either one of the children suggests the word, or it is adopted from a previously-learned phrase. Permitting the utmost latitude of probability to the cited instances in favour of communal authorship, the evidence amassed by Miss Pound from various sources must be accepted as so contradictory that neither side proves its case.

In the shepherds' pastimes, recounted in *The Complaynte of Scotland*, the 'pleysand storeis' are first recited, then the 'sueit melodius sangis' are sung, and then 'eftir this sueit celest armonye, tha began to dance in ane ring'. 'Robene hude', 'thom of lyn', and 'johnne ermistrangis dance' are three titles of dance tunes which may be connected with modern ballads,—'thom of lyn' being taken as the tune of the modern 'Tamlane', which is catalogued as 'the tayl of the yong tamlene' among the 'pleysand storeis'.

In view of the alleged alliance between ballads and dancing

it is singular that among the shepherds the narrative of 'Tamlane' should not be sung, and that the air for the dance should have a different name. It requires a great deal of special pleading to prove that either narrative and tune or ballad and dance were bracketed together. It is quite within the possibilities of popular tradition that Tamlane or Thom of Lyn should have come to be regarded as a living personage, like Arthur and Robin Hood, most of whose exploits and personality are mythical, or like Sir James the Rose who never existed, yet fought in the traditional 'Battle of Harlaw'; and that dance tunes were named in his honour as a result of his ballad fame. It may be that considerations of this kind have impressed the communalists with the weakness of certain parts of their own theory, for their deductions are curious. None of the principal members of their sept claims definitely that ballads are dancing songs; Professor Kittredge goes as far as to say that our extant ballads were not communally improvised. Their case is that the ballads are derivations or developments from dancing songs, which were composed by companies. What would literary critics have to say of an historian of the drama who reasoned that, because both in Greece and in England the first attempts at dramatic construction were bound up with religious observances, the plays of Shakespeare, Congreve, and Shaw were written for the same purpose and are essentially religious in character? Yet that is the method of deduction adopted by the adherents of the communal theory of ballad origins. Gummere and, more emphatically, Professor Kittredge admit that the individual theory is consistent with common sense, and straightway proceed to rally, in support of the opposite assumption, Faroe Islanders, school children, and Russian cigarette-makers. They defend themselves by contending that if the individual solution is right, 'all boundaries of the subject are obscured, the material is questionable, and a haze at once fills the air' (Gummere), or by declaring that the individualist explanation 'is far too simple' (Kittredge). It cannot be both simple and obscure.

Everything has a beginning somewhere, and it is ridiculous

to suggest that, at a hypothetical gathering where song was invented, the individuals present were each incapable of composing verse until by a spontaneous and instantaneous impulse they all burst into poetry together. The ballads themselves—setting aside the broadside and chapbook specimens, which were not composed by syndicates—present to us in every instance the credentials of individual origin. That they are almost without exception anonymous does not affect the point; a vast mass of early poetry is either anonymous or of uncertain authorship, and Scotland's finest songs before Burns are in like case. No one would venture to assert that 'Andro and his cutty gun', or 'The Wowing of Jok and Jynny', or 'Sumer is i-cumen in', was written by a gathering, convivial or philosophical, simply because the author is unknown. Most people in Scotland, including Burns enthusiasts, associate 'Annie Laurie' and 'Mary of Argyle' with Burns; and, indeed, the folk do not worry themselves over nice questions of genesis. The 'Old Lady's Collection' of traditional songs and ballads, for instance, contains poems by known authors, including 'Tullochgorum' Skinner. Doubtless she learned these poems orally, without the aid of print. Henryson's 'Bludy Serk' and 'Robine and Makyne' and Scott's ballad emendations prove that the true spirit of authorship in the popular traditional manner is not inconsistent with high poetic art. There are ballads of which we have no versions worthy to be called poetry, and there are ballads of which there are versions that deserved to be classed among the higher reaches of poetry. One of the reasons for the depreciation of Peter Buchan's collection is that it contains so much of the first type. I am sure that the former class emanated from petty versifiers, inglorious but not mute Miltons of village and field, while the nobler ballads were the work of poets either of local or of national reputation, or deserving of such fame. Despite the unconsciously rough usage which continuous contact with the popular mind entails, ballads have come down to the opening of the present century, purely by traditional agency, which have preserved gems of narrative, description, and poetry. 'The Douglas Tragedy', 'The Lass of Roch Royal', 'Johnnie

o' Braidsleys', 'Edom o' Gordon', and a score of others have retained in the latest recorded versions the cream of the first texts discovered.

That the finer ballads were not composed by any 'son of the soil' is, I think, adequately demonstrated by a comparison between an early traditional version of any great ballad and a ploughman's or 'bothy' ballad of recent times. 'The Barnyards o' Delgaty', one of the most widely known and an average example in the north-east of Scotland of the ploughman's ballads, runs thus :

In New Deer parish I was born,  
 A child of youth to Methlick came ;  
 And gin ye doot me to believe,  
 The session-clerk will tell the same.  
 Lintrin adie toorin adie,  
 Lintrin adie toorin ae.

Good education I did get,  
 And I did learn to read and write ;  
 My parents they were proud o' me,  
 My mother in me took delight.

To bide upon my father's farm,  
 That was never my intent ;  
 I loved the lasses double weel,  
 And aye the weary drap o' drink.

As I cam in by Netherdale,  
 At Turra market for to fee,  
 I fell in wi' a thrifty Scot  
 Fae the Barnyards o' Delgaty.

He promised me the ae best pair  
 I ever set my e'en upon ;  
 When I gaed hame to the Barnyards  
 There was naething there but skin and bone.

Theauld black horse sat on his rump,  
 Theauld white meer lay on her wime,  
 And a' that I could hup and crack,  
 They widna rise at yokin' time.

Meg Macpherson mak's my brose,  
 Her and me we canna gree;  
 First a mote and syne a knot,,  
 And aye the tither jilp o' bree.

But yet when I gang to the kirk,  
 Mony's the bonnie lass I see,  
 Prim sittin' by her daddy's side,  
 And winkin' owre the pews to me.

I can drink and nae be drunk,  
 I can fight and nae be slain,  
 I can coort anither's lass,  
 . And aye be welcome to my ain.

My can'le noo it is brunt oot,  
 The snotter's fairly on the wane;  
 Sae fare ye well, ye Barnyards,  
 Yell never catch me here again.

Obviously this ditty never came from the sources out of which the great ballads arose, yet it was conceived in a mind as rustic and imperfectly educated as those which composed—if we believe the communal theorists—the triumphs of metrical tradition. It is full of traditional characteristics: the meaningless refrain, the phrases ‘child of youth’ and ‘weary drap o’ drink’, the penultimate stanza (which Burns lifted bodily from a folk-song current in his day), and the pseudo-moralizing of the final verse. ‘The Barnyards o’ Delgaty’ and its many frightful peers illustrate several of the insignia of popular tradition, and point the searcher away outwith the confines of the folk for the origins of the great ballads. The Pharisee and the publican were not more radically different than this sort of thing from ‘Clerk Saunders’, ‘The Lass of Roch Royal’, and ‘Barbara Allan’.

The two styles are occasionally found united in a single ballad, the tenth-rate stuff having been stitched on to the true fabric by some blundering clown. In the first quarter of the nineteenth century, Kinloch got from James Beattie a pretty ballad, already known, called ‘The Gardener’:

The gardener stands in his bower-door,  
 With a primrose in his hand.  
 And by there came a leal maiden,  
 As jimp's a willow wand.

'O lady, can you fancy me,  
 For to be my bride,  
 You'll get a' the flowers in my garden  
 To be to you a weed,' &c.

About the same time and again three-quarters of a century later, the same ballad was found in oral tradition, with this incubus thrust upon it:

There lived a lass now near han' by,  
 Who many sweethearts had,  
 An' the gardener laddie viewed them a',  
 Jist as they cam an' gaed.

The gardener laddie viewed them a',  
 An' he said he hadnna skeel,  
 'But an I wad gae as aft's the rest,  
 They wad say I were a feel.

'I'm sue she's nae a proper lass,  
 Neither handsome, tight, nor tall';  
 But another young man that stood by  
 Said, 'Slight her not at all,

'For we are a' come o' womankin',  
 If we wad call to min',  
 An' it's unto women for their sake  
 We surely sud be kin'.'

'Well, if I thought her worth my pains,  
 Unto her I wad go,  
 An' I could wad a thousand pounds  
 She wadna say me no.'

Lady Margret stan's in her bower door,  
 As straight's a willow wan',  
 An' by it cam the gardener lad,  
 Wi' a red rose in his han', &c.

The amalgam in 'The Gardener' represents the disparity between even second-rate ballads—for 'The Gardener' is no

more than that—and popularly made ‘poetry’. These inserted stanzas, like ‘The Barnyards’, reveal in their attitude to women a philosophy of the sexes which used to be universal and is still common in rural areas; but it is quite at odds with the chivalrous treatment of women in the great ballads—another proof that the latter were conceived outside the ruder society of the folk.

## IV

Three of the constituent features of ballads in general have been taken as proofs of communal origin—‘incremental repetition’, commonplaces, and refrains. ‘Incremental repetition’ is defined by Gummere as ‘the lingering’ over details of the narrative, ‘the succession of stanzas or of verses, mainly in triads, which are identical save for one or two pivotal words’. Incremental repetition ‘supplies a visible link between oldest choral repetition and actual text’; it ‘points unerringly back to choral conditions, to a dance where the crowd moves to its own singing, and where the song, mainly repetition, got its matter from successive stages or shifts of what may be called a situation rather than a story’. More than one student has pointed out that in the ballads this ‘incremental repetition’ is not found in the earliest specimens preserved, that it occurs most frequently in broadside versions, and that it is a frequent characteristic of other kinds of lyric poetry. In traditional ballads incremental repetition is inextricably mixed with the commonplace and the refrain, and a study of its vagaries in oral usage reveals an aspect quite different from that which appears in an examination of printed texts without experience of actual singing or recitation. In the very long narrative ballads we look for incremental repetition, for the simple reason that the singer requires an occasional respite for breath. Ballads are not in this country sung communally. Some one sings a ballad and the others join in with the refrain or with any stanza they happen to be familiar with. Ballad versions run in families. The procedure, as described by a member of a family that has produced

folk-singers for many generations, was in this fashion. 'They met at somebody's house one evening, the women taking their knitting. All sat round in a circle, while some one of the company sang a ballad, the whole assembly joining in or repeating the last line of each verse in order to give the singer time to get breath for his next verse. Then some others contributed, and all the while a large pot boiled on the fire, cooking kail or turnips which were ladled out on to a bere-meal scone before the guests departed. Then another evening they met at another house, and repeated the performance, with perhaps other ballads, but the same hospitality!'

The refrain performs two technical functions. It may either fill out the words to fit in with the air:

There was a king's daughter lived in the north—

Hey the rose an' the linsie O—

An' she has courted her father's clerk—

An' awa be the greenwood sidie O.

('The Cruel Mother');

and in 'The Elfin Knight', 'The Twa Sisters', 'The Fair Flower of Northumberland', 'Hind Horn', and many others. Or it may be for the double purpose of rounding off the verse and at the same time affording the singer a breathing interlude:

A bonnie May went out one day

Some fresh fish for to buy,

An' there she spied a wee toon's clerk,

An' he followed her speedily—

Ricky doo dum dae, doo dum dae,

Ricky dicky doo dum dae.

The latter type is more common in the later than in the older ballads. The commonplace has also a dual quality. In popular minstrelsy certain actions, objects, and emotions are described in set terms. This is in accordance with the habitual expression of all whose vocabulary is limited, besides being parallel with the customs of speech in all matters where procedure has become stereotyped. Just as chairman after chairman of public meetings refuses to 'stand between' the audience and the star speaker; just as a shareholder in a public company

who has been asked to move the re-election of a director 'begs to propose' or has 'much pleasure in proposing'; so the balladist invariably calls water 'wan water', and a page 'a bonnie little boy', and a note 'a braid letter', pronounces the curse 'an ill death may you dee', and so on. When this formal mode of expression is extended from single words and short phrases to whole stanzas, we reach a second duty of the commonplace. Certain instructions—a call for a horse, an order to carry a message—and certain situations—the receipt of a letter, a swift journey—are narrated in terms hallowed by long application. When the ballad singer reaches such passages, the audience know what is coming and join in. This heightens the social effect of ballad-singing.

In about fifty per cent. of the cases of incremental repetition the commonplace is included. In all cases, however, incremental repetition is susceptible of being interpreted as a factor of the narrative, without any reference whatever to the movements of hypothetical dances. The repetition, substantially verbatim, of the words of a stanza—not necessarily in triads, for often the stanza is repeated but once, at times the increment is fourfold—permits the audience to join in, just as the appearance of the commonplace does. It has a further effect which has not, I think, hitherto been noticed. Much has been made of the artlessness, the simplicity, of the ballad, and these qualities are certainly predominant in the vocabulary and the details of the 'plot'. But when a ballad is sung it communicates sensations not in their kind essentially different from those aroused by a novel or a play. The interest of the audience is firmly, if subtly, won, and in the development of the story in the lengthy ballads incremental repetition tends towards a result resembling that attained by art-poetry. The marking-time of the repetition whets the appetite for the crisis that is to follow; it is a pause in the action before the narrative hastens towards the usually tragic culmination. The Porter Scene in *Macbeth* is an interlude different in quality but not different in fundamental character from incremental repetition in the ballads. How involved may become the employment of commonplace and incremental repetition is

exemplified in 'Love Johnnie'. Johnnie desires to send a message to his sweetheart, the King's daughter:

1. 'It's where'll I get a little wee boy  
That will win gowd an' fee,  
That will run on to the King's castle,  
An' come quickly back to me ?'
2. 'It's here am I, a little wee boy,  
That will win gowd an' fee,  
That will run on to the King's castle,  
An' come quickly back to thee.'
3. 'It's where ye find the brigs broken,  
Ye'll bend your bow an' swim,  
An' where ye find the grass grow green,  
Ye'll slack your shoon an' rin.'
4. 'An' when ye come to the King's castle,  
Ye'll ride it roon about,  
An' there ye'll spy a lady fair  
At the window lookin' out.'
5. 'Ye'll bid her fess wi' her the silken (\*Commonplace)  
shift \*  
That her ain hand sewed the sleeve,  
An' ye'll bid her come on to the good (\*Commonplace)  
green woods \*  
An' speir nane o' the high man's leave.'
6. 'Ye'll bid her fess wi' her the silken (Incremental repetition,  
shift  
That her ain hand sewed the gare,  
An' bid her come on to the good green  
woods,  
An' Love Johnnie will meet her there.'
7. It's where he found the brigs broken,  
He bent his bow an' swam,  
An' where he found the grass grow green,  
He slacked his shoon an' ran.'
8. An' when he cam to the King's castle,  
He rode it roon about,  
An' there he spied a lady fair  
At the window lookin' out.'

9. 'Good-day, good-day', the little boy (*Lingereng*)  
said,—  
'Good-day, good-day', said she,  
'Good-day, good-day', the lady she said,  
'An' what's your will wi' me?'
10. 'Ye're bidden fess wi' you the silken (*Incremental repetition of st. 5*)  
shift  
That your ain hand sewed the sleeve,  
An' ye'll come on to the good green  
woods,  
Speir name o' the high man's leave.
11. 'Ye're bidden fess wi' you the silken (*Incremental repetition of st. 6*)  
shift.  
That your ain hand sewed the gare,  
An' ye'll come on to the good green woods,  
Love Johnnie will meet you there.'

The quotation is from a seventy-year-old version, but another text, from the same district but recorded one hundred years earlier, has a stanza breaking the repetitional sequence between 1 and 2, omits stanzas 3–6 (obviously a lapse of memory), and omits stanza 9 (which is not essential to the story); otherwise it is practically identical.

Tautology and clichés are both insistent tempters of the human being who desires to express himself, but in their every manifestation they are each bound to have had a beginning somewhere. Repetition, the overwhelming weight of evidence goes to show, was a development of ballad expression subsequent to the invention of ballads, and it scarcely needs to be stated that the aptness of a particular phrase in an early ballad led to its adoption in similar circumstances in other ballads, and that thus the commonplace grew and spread. The refrains are either onomatopoeic—e.g. 'a riddle a in aldinadie, A riddle a in aldinee'—in assonance with a sequence of notes or with the sound of a musical instrument, or they are meaningless phrases—like 'fine flowers in the valley', 'lay the bent to the bonnie broom'—which had been lifted more or less corruptly from other non-narrative ditties. But from none of the three appurtenances of balladry—repeti-

tion, commonplace, and refrain—can evidence be drawn more compatible with communal than with individual composition.

## V

Only one theory of authorship can pass all tests of probability and available knowledge. The ballads were originally composed by individuals, the best ballads by poets of culture and artistic power. Recited, sung, or in some way communicated by their authors to a wider circle, they were memorized by various members of these audiences, and by them orally transmitted to others, and thus gradually disseminated throughout the community. Farmers, sailors, shepherds, drovers, harvest hands following their vocation up and down the country, beggars, itinerant merchants, all sorts of travellers, and in more recent years navvies, have carried the ballads hither and thither from shire to shire, and even across the seas, while the chapbook and broadside printers with their cheap publications lent to the process of broadcasting an assistance that could well have been spared. The ballads thus circulated acquired local colour and associations: ‘Edom o’ Gordon’ has an English, a Lanarkshire, and an Aberdeenshire setting. They suffered all sorts of vicissitudes. Faulty recollection on the part of a new singer or reciter resulted in alterations; indifferent hearing or intelligence had a similar effect; persons who had, or imagined they had, a *flair* for verse, could not be expected to refrain from changing rhymes, substituting phrases, interpolating fresh stanzas, in the ballads of which they acquired versions; collectors like Percy, Scott, and Jamieson furbished up their collections; the occurrence of an event broadly similar to one recounted in a ballad would naturally lead to the adaptation of that ballad to the recent incident; and few of those, in short, through whose minds the ballads passed, did not unconsciously or intentionally impress their own mark upon them. In the traditional version of ‘Harlaw’ (which cannot be traced beyond 1800, and has every appearance of eighteenth-century origin), the mailed Lowlanders become ‘redcoats’; the Forbeses, who were not in the

battle, share the leadership of the Lowland forces with those two mythical worthies, Sir James the Rose and Sir John the Graeme; and the scale of the battle, including a few hours' interval while Forbes's servant runs home for his master's harness, is quite Homeric, and might have originated in the Hellenic enthusiasm of such a one as Robert Forbes, whose translation, '*Ajax's Speech to the Grecian Knabbs*', appeared in 1742. The historical ballads dealing with the Scottish feuds of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries are all the work of partisans, usually of the discomfited faction. In short, while individuals were responsible for the first drafts of the ballads, which are lost, so many additions and alterations have been made in the course of traditional descent that the ballads as we have them to-day may accurately be termed of folk-authorship, but the composition was incremental, cumulative, and haphazard, not communal and instantaneous. The last argument against the communal theory is found in the ballad airs, which in every way resemble the ballads in their development and vagaries, but which would hardly be claimed by the most rabid communalist as the product of festal throngs or homogeneous companies. That subject, however, is beyond the purpose of this essay.

ALEXANDER KEITH.



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